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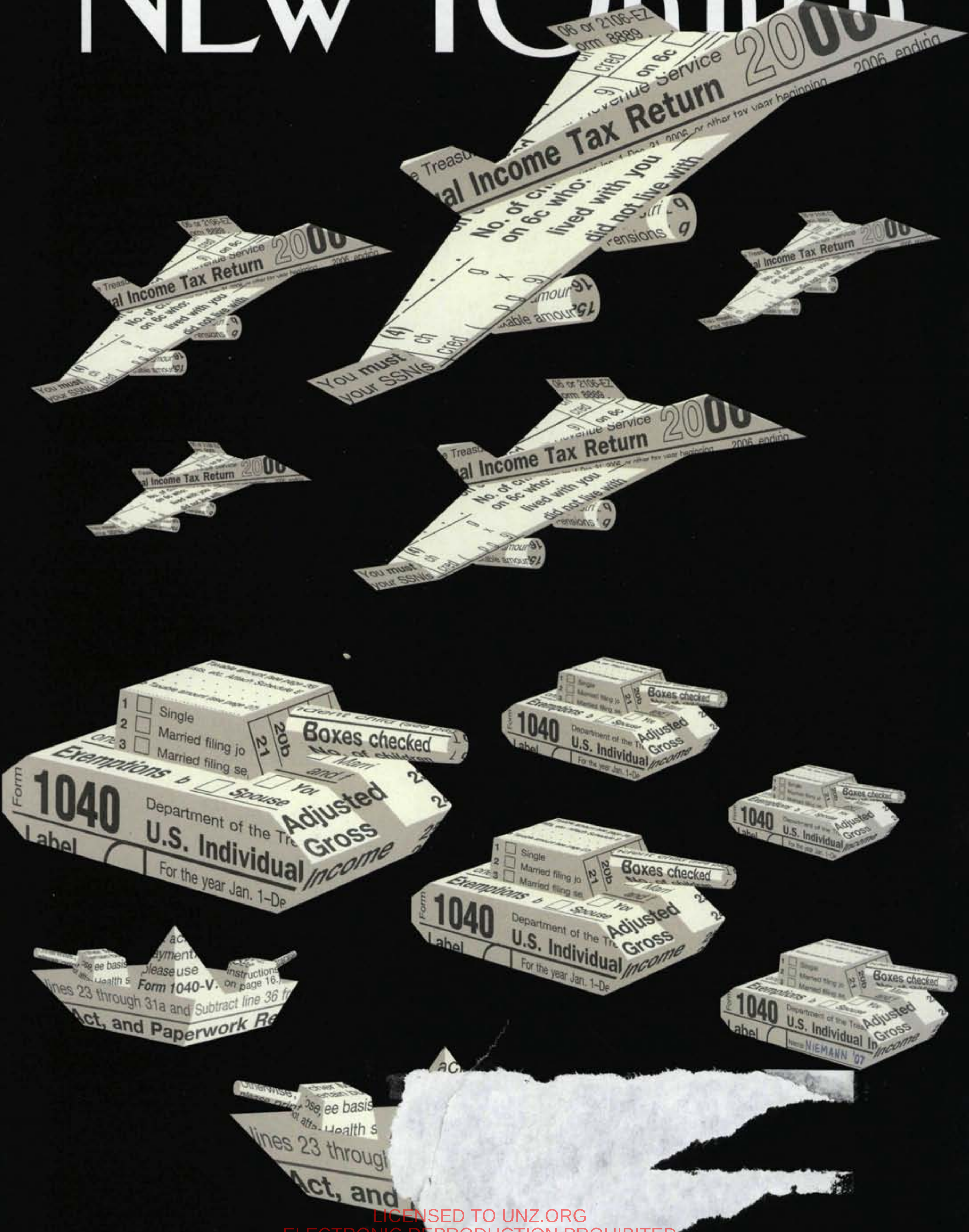
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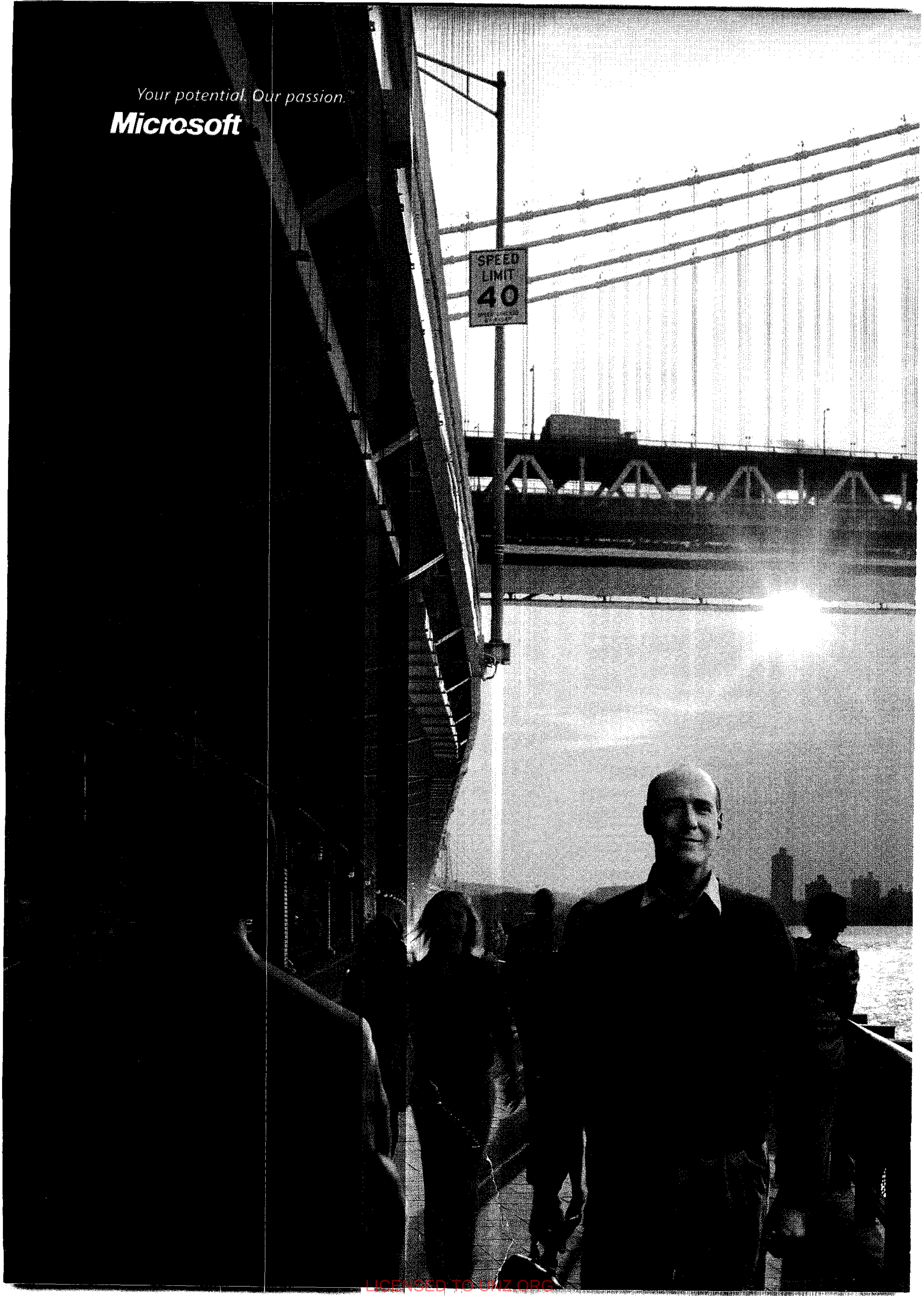
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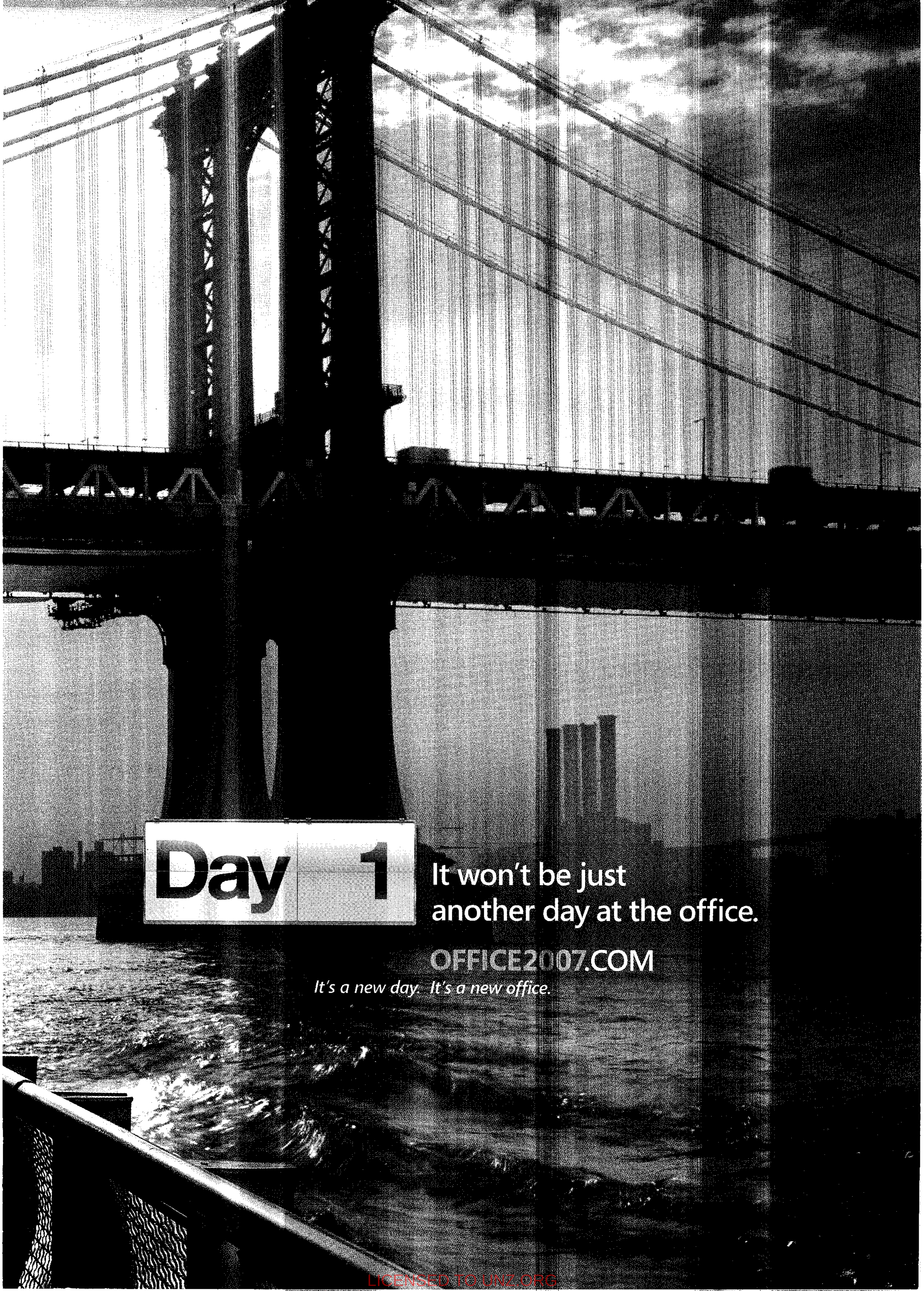

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THIS WEEK:

Audio: Sasha Frere-Jones talks about Prince in Las Vegas.

Slide Show: A new home for antiquities at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Ask the Author: John Cassidy answers readers' questions about his Profile of Paul Wolfowitz.

PLUS

Dan Baum's New Orleans Journal, the Cartoon Caption Contest, animated versions of New Yorker cartoons, and an archive of articles from the magazine as well as hundreds of past Web exclusives.

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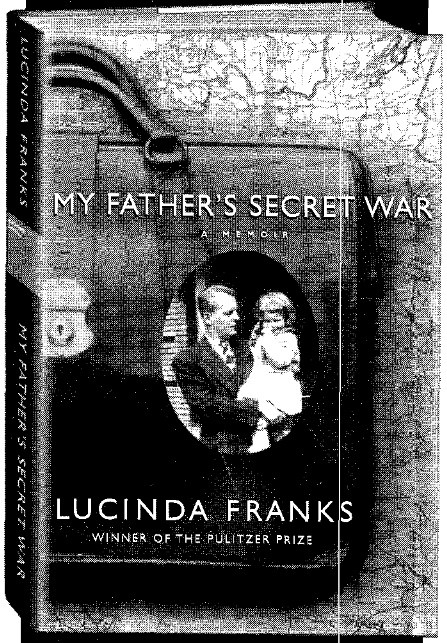

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CONTRIBUTORS

John Cassidy ("The Next Crusade," p. 36) is a staff writer and the author of "Dot.Con."

Rebecca Mead (The Talk of the Town, p. 25; "Den of Antiquity," p. 52) has been writing for the magazine since 1997. Her book "One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding" comes out in May.

Philip Gourevitch (Comment, p. 23) is the editor of *The Paris Review* and a staff writer. He is working on a book, with the filmmaker Errol Morris, about Abu Ghraib.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 27) writes a regular column on economics, business, and finance. He is the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds."

Dan Chiasson (Poem, p. 32) is a poet and literary critic. A collection of his essays, "One Kind of Everything: Poem and Person in Contemporary America," came out last month.

Henry Alford (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 34) contributed to the essay anthology "Money Changes Everything," which was published in January.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 26) is a staff writer.

Jerome Groopman ("What's Normal?," p. 28) is the Recanati Professor of Medicine at Harvard. His book "How Doctors Think" has just been published.

Mary Kinzie (Poem, p. 49) teaches poetry and fiction at Northwestern University. Her seventh collection of poems, "California Sorrow," will come out in September.

Don DeLillo (Fiction, p. 62) has a new novel, "Falling Man," which will be published next month.

Adam Gopnik (Readings, p. 80), a staff writer, has published three books, including "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York."

Joan Acocella (Readings, p. 85) is the author of "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints," which has just been published.

Clive James (Readings, p. 91) has written fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. A book of his essays, "Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts," came out last month.

Christoph Niemann (Cover; Illustration, p. 27) is an illustrator and designer. His children's book "The Police Cloud" has just been published.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

John Cassidy takes readers' questions about his Profile of Paul Wolfowitz. / An audio interview with *Sasha Frere-Jones* about Prince in Las Vegas. / A slide show of the Metropolitan Museum's new home for antiquities. / *Dan Baum's* daily dispatches from New Orleans. / From the archives: *John Cassidy* on the Bretton Woods plan, *Edmund Wilson* on detective stories, and more. / A selection of articles from the current issue. / Video versions of animated cartoons; the caption contest; Q. & A.s and other Web exclusives; and a calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country, on our redesigned Web site.

THE MAIL

RADIATION DETECTORS

Steve Coll, in detailing the danger of nuclear material being smuggled into the United States, describes proposed radiation detectors around sensitive areas ("The Unthinkable," March 12th). He writes that "the project promises to be expensive and would require leaps of ingenuity to overcome technical problems presented by the laws of physics." Indeed! Professor Robert Hofstadter and I were commissioned, in the early nineteen-fifties, to examine how one would detect one cubic inch of highly enriched uranium or plutonium smuggled into the United States. Accordingly, we wrote the Screwdriver Report (after Robert Oppenheimer's famous remark), which analyzed radiations emitted by these materials and the response if they were irradiated with subatomic particles. Not surprisingly, we found that such methods could work only if you were close to the materials and if the importer did not employ heavy shielding. Notwithstanding great progress in radiation-detector technology and data-processing methods, distinguishing between signals from fissionable materials and those from cosmic rays or natural radioactive substances remains nearly impossible, given their fleeting passage through screening portals. Only radiation detectors actually included with shipments, which would be feasible in overseas shipping containers, have a good chance of accomplishing this task.

Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky
Director Emeritus
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Stanford University
Menlo Park, Calif.

CHALK AND EVOLUTION

John McPhee, in his tale of the Cretaceous Chalk, notes that Charles Darwin's Down House was where Darwin "did all his great work" ("Season on the Chalk," March 12th). Part of this great work, included in the first edition of "On the Origin of Species," was to estimate the time it took for the center of the chalk beds to erode, creating the low and wide topographic gap between the North and South Downs known as the Weald. Darwin calculated that the "denudation of the Weald must have required 306,662,400 years; or say three hundred million years"—at least several times longer than what we know today. Although wildly imprecise, his reasoning was legitimate and his point well taken: the earth was far older than was usually supposed by his contemporaries, and, therefore, "What an infinite number of generations . . . must have succeeded each other in the long roll of years!" Such an argument was crucial in accounting for the necessarily slow pace of his "descent with modification."

Léo F. Laporte
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Redwood City, Calif.

POLITICAL FASHIONS

Dana Goodyear's description of Cameron Silver, the purveyor of high-end vintage clothing, reminded me of Alexis de Tocqueville's fear that an aristocracy born of commercial-industrial society could be more self-referential than earlier ones ("This Old Thing?," March 19th). Silver's comparison of his jet-setting work in building a market for vintage clothing to the life of a politician disturbed me. Evidently, we have yet to understand Tocqueville's doubts about whether or not democratic values can survive as anything more than advertising copy in an industrial economy steered by the incantations of high finance (or perhaps fashion). It may be that we have passed the point of Tocquevillian choice when our political culture has become so commercialized that merchants look to it to define their work ethic.

Alan W. Dyer
Boston, Mass.

•

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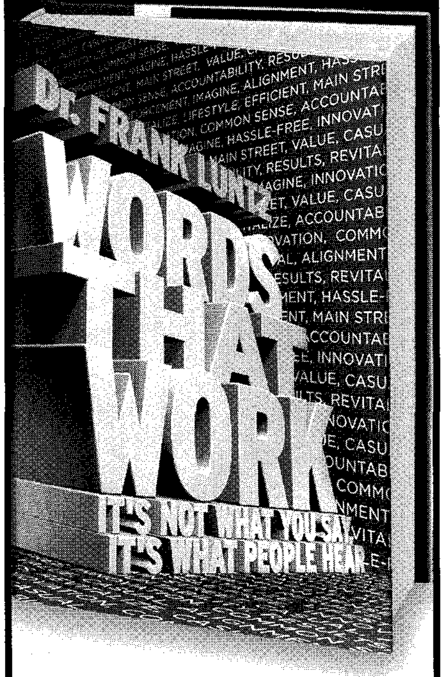

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Assorted members of the Hungry March Band. Photograph by Brian Finke.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
8	9	10	4	5	6	7

THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
REUNITED

"Alone Together," the live album from 1972 that first captured the guitarist Jim Hall and the bassist Ron Carter, is a high-water mark for modern jazz duets. This week at the Blue Note, the two perform as a duo for the first time in ten years to celebrate the album's thirty-fifth anniversary. (See page 10.)

ART
OFFICE POLITICS

The conceptual and video art works in "For a Special Place: Documents and Works from the Generali Foundation Collection," currently at the Austrian Cultural Forum, are hardly narrow in their thematic range. But one recurring motif—the rhythms, accoutrements, and resentments of office life—may make the show an object of particular interest for midtown workers on their lunch breaks. (See page 12.)

DANCE
TENNESSEE WALTZ

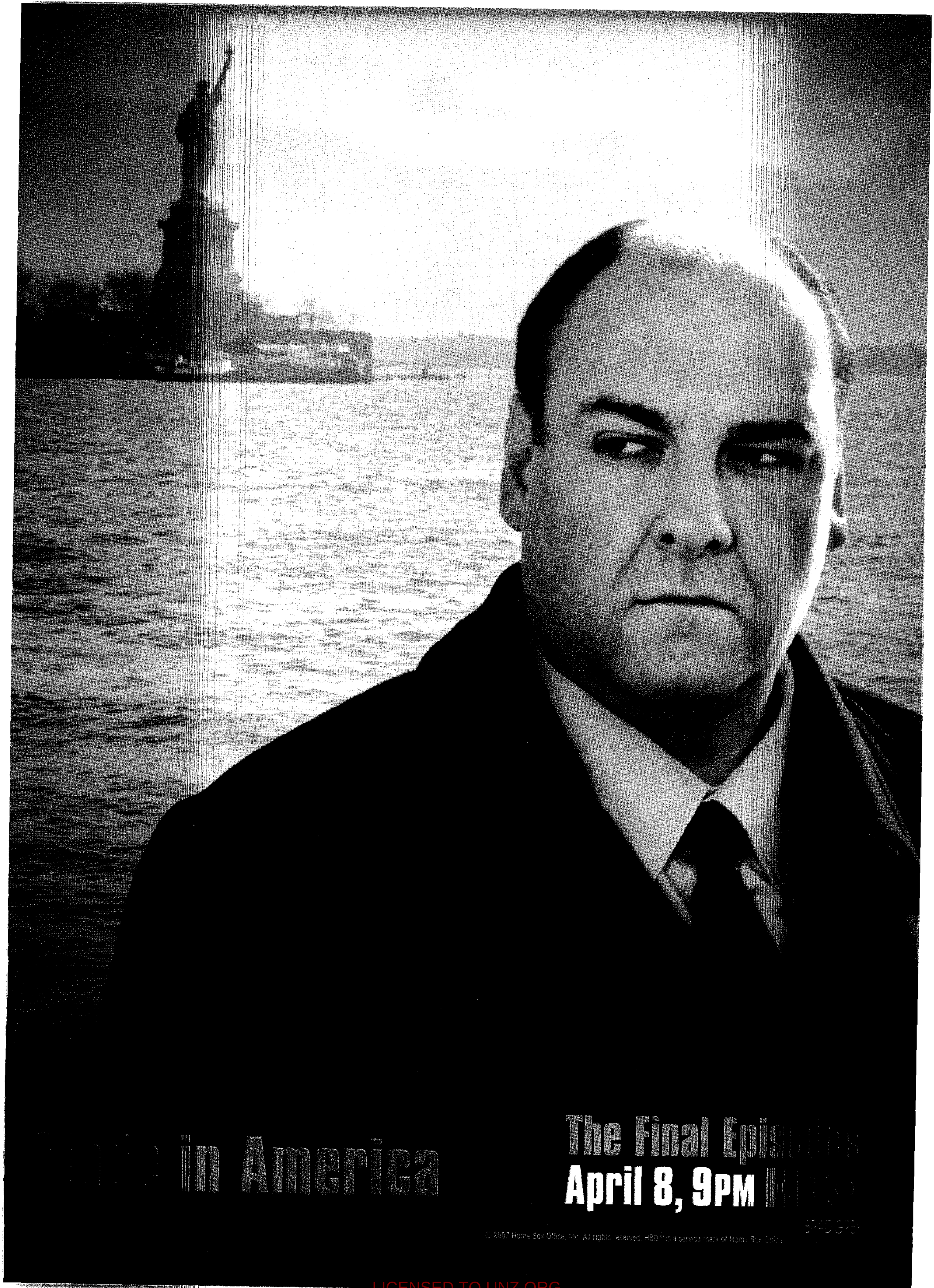
The fresh-faced dancers of Ballet Memphis celebrate the company's twentieth anniversary with a visit to the Joyce, bringing dances set to Mozart, Roy Orbison, and Acoustica, in two programs that include works by Trey McIntyre. (See page 14.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
VENI, VIDI, VICI

For years, "Giulio Cesare," which dates from 1724, was just about the only Handel opera that the major companies would touch. The Met's high-powered revival features an array of impressive vocal talent, including the soprano Ruth Ann Swenson, the mezzo-soprano Alice Coote, and the countertenor David Daniels. (See page 14.)

MOVIES
CONTINENTAL DRIFT

The fourteenth annual New York African Film Festival, at Walter Reade, opens with "Rostov-Luanda," by the Mauritanian filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako, the director of the recent hit "Bamako." Also featured are "Clouds Over Conakry," from Guinea, about an imam's son who becomes an artist, and "Teranga Blues," from Senegal, about an illegal immigrant who is deported from France. (See page 19.)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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE ACCOMPLICES
Bernard Weinraub's drama, presented by the New Group, is about the revisionist Zionist Hillel Kook, who campaigned for the aid of European Jews during the Second World War. In previews. Opens April 9. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

ALL THE WRONG REASONS
John Fugelsang performs a one-man show, about drug smuggling, neo-Nazis, and his Catholic upbringing. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

BLACKBIRD
Manhattan Theatre Club presents a play by David Harrower, starring Jeff Daniels and Alison Pill, about a young woman who shows up unexpectedly at the office of her former lover. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. Opens April 10. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS
Transport Group presents William Inge's drama from 1957, about a middle-class family in Oklahoma in the nineteen-twenties. In previews. Opens April 5. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

EXITS AND ENTRANCES
Athol Fugard's play, presented by Primary Stages, traces the author's relationship with the South African actor André Huguenet. Opens April 4. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

FROST/NIXON
Frank Langella and Michael Sheen star in the Donmar Warehouse production of Peter Morgan's drama, based on the taped conversations between Robert Frost and President Nixon in 1977. In previews. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

INHERIT THE WIND
Christopher Plummer and Brian Dennehy star in Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee's dramatic retelling of the Scopes trial. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL
A musical adaptation of the Reese Witherspoon film, about a sorority girl who ends up at Harvard Law School. Directed and choreographed by Jerry Mitchell. In previews. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

LOSING SOMETHING
Kevin Cunningham's new play, about a middle-aged man facing the ghosts of his past, uses 3-D technology to create lifelike apparitions. In previews. Opens April 6. (3LD Art and Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101.)

A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN
The Old Vic's revival of Eugene O'Neill's romantic drama comes to Broadway, with Eve Best and Kevin Spacey. Howard Davies directs. In previews. Opens April 9. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE PIRATE QUEEN
A new musical by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg ("Les Misérables"), based on the story of the sixteenth-century Irish chieftain Grace O'Malley. In previews. Opens April 5. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

REARVIEWMIRROR
Carl Forsman directs a play by Eric Winick, about rock-and-roll fans looking for spiritual fulfillment. In previews. Opens April 5. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

SERENDIB
David Zellnik's play about a group of filmmakers making a documentary about a team of scientists. Part of the "First Light" festival, which focusses on science-themed plays. Opens April 4. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

TRANSFIGURES
Women's Project presents a play conceived and directed by Lear deBessonet, in which tourists in Israel fall into religious delusions, a phenomenon known as the Jerusalem syndrome. Previews begin April 6. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

BLINDNESS
A doctor's wife is the only person who can see in a town plagued by sightlessness, in Joe Tantalo's adaptation of a novel by the Nobel laureate José Saramago. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through April 8.)

THE CAVE DWELLERS
William Saroyan's 1957 play follows the travails of a troupe of actors and foundlings—and, eventually, one trained black bear—who take shelter from a howling storm in an abandoned theatre, where the moth-eaten furniture and dusty chandeliers evoke a melancholy feeling. It's a curious play, itself as wandering and unmoored as the allegorical characters who are gathered in this odd corner of the world, but it's lovingly enacted by the Pearl's company. Robert Hock is particularly vivid as the King, a sad-faced, winsome old clown who becomes a sort of patriarch to the group of hungry souls. Shepard Sobel directs with affectionate tenderness. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through April 8.)

CURTAINS
While taking a curtain call for a lame "Oklahoma!" retread, the inept and unliked leading lady, Jessica Cranshaw (the amusing Patty Goble), is murdered. The task of sorting out the murderer falls to the stagestruck police detective Frank Cioffi (the droll, pitch-perfect David Hyde Pierce), who, as the evening wears on, also sorts out the show's gnarly production problems. Originally conceived by the Broadway pros Peter Stone, John Kander, and Fred Ebb (the book and additional lyrics are by Rupert Holmes), "Curtains," cleverly directed by Scott Ellis, expertly spoofs everything to do with the clichés of the Broadway musical. At once a musical within a musical, a thriller, a backstage drama, and a romance, it is the narrative equivalent of a Dagwood sandwich, stuffed with relish and a lot of ham. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/2/07.) (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCING WITH BISHOP
Saskia Hegt incorporates dance into her performance of selected poems and letters by the poet Elizabeth Bishop. (La Mama E.T.C., 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through April 8.)

ESSENTIAL SELF-DEFENSE
Adam Rapp's new play begins with a woman in an assertion class whacking the bejeezus out of a man dressed in a yellow Michelin Man-shaped sponge. It's a post-9/11 version of meeting cute in Rapp's first foray into fable, a surreal story of radical innocence played out in a Midwestern town reacting to a climate of mysterious terror. Rapp is a latter-day incarnation of Sam Shepard, a word hoard with movie-star looks and a rock-and-roll pedigree. He spins a good yarn, with smart talk and weird behavior, a sprawling but entertaining tall tale of fear and loathing in Midwestern America. There are compelling performances from Heather Goldenhersh and Paul Sparks as the oddest of odd couples, an inventive set by David Korins, and lively direction by Carolyn Cantor. Rapp, who has his own band, says he plans more music-inspired plays; despite the pleasures of this one, fans of his writing should keep their fingers crossed that he'll grow out of it. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE EXILES
Two hanging screens display a silent movie of Agamemnon's murder by his wife, Clytemnestra. As they're furled up, we're eased into a Bunraku-style adaptation of the mythic tale of the two siblings caught up in the long shadow of the Trojan War: Electra and her mad brother, Orestes (Nicky Paraiso), who must avenge their noble father's death, then become outcasts themselves. In Theodora Skipitares's striking reimagining of Euripides' play, richly detailed Bunraku puppets with articulate arms, flowing curls, and glassy eyes gesticulate, mourn, and offer one another solace while loops of video imagery (by Kay Hines) work in visual counterpoint. An image of the White House sits above the action onstage, reminding us that the oldest tales continue to reverberate. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through April 8.)

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

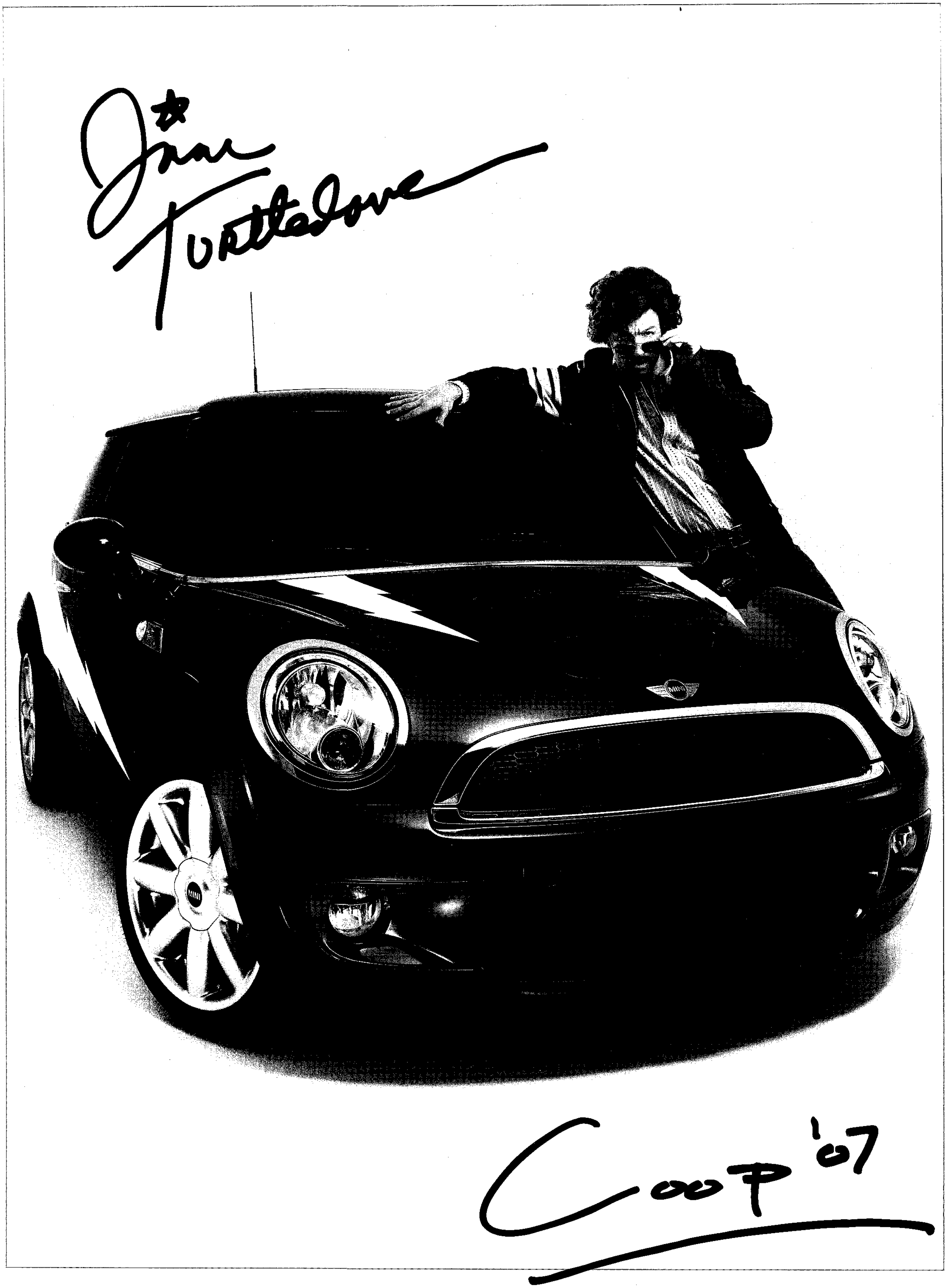
TABLES FOR TWO
KLEE

200 Ninth Ave., at 22nd St. (212-633-8033)—"To emphasize only the beautiful," the artist Paul Klee said, "seems to me to be like a mathematical system that only concerns itself with positive numbers." Klee shares a name with a European-American brasserie (sample dishes: Kobe-beef hot dog topped with sauerkraut, Tyrolean "mac and cheese") opened last fall by the Austrian-born chef Daniel Angerer, an alum of Jean Georges and Bouley, and Lori Mason, who works the front of the house, in addition to being a litigator and Angerer's fiancée. (He proposed the day they closed on the Chelsea storefront.) The beautiful: warmth, heart, light, and a menu and Web site sumptuously wrought in deep purple. The ugly: hit-or-miss flavor and amiable but seriously gawky service.

Things begin pleasingly. Herb butter in a paint jar. Salty bread. A bar with a homey steel sink and pastel cocktails suggests hospitality, ease. You order starters. Forty-five minutes go by. "There was some sort of malfunction with the machine, and it didn't get your order." No problem. The Holunder margarita, with elder-flower essence, has induced spa-worthy levels of relaxation. The Klee salad, when it does arrive, has leaves of Bibb lettuce that look like flower petals. You want to pin it with a blue ribbon. Only when the main courses fail to appear does it become apparent that efficiency isn't the only thing lacking. While you are waiting—machine again—the man at the next table comes toppling down on top of his stylish but flimsy chair. No one rushes over to help.

But say, as on another night, that the courses come consecutively, the seats hold up. An Alsatian take on thin-crust pizza, laced liberally with sweet onions, works in a Puckish way, and the Wiener schnitzel delivers. Still, the *bacalao* croquettes coalesce in a bland mash. The produce here is generally prizewinning, so it's surprising that a Mason jar of vegetables and spaetzle—a dish that, a waiter declares, Daniel created for Lori—isn't more impassioned. Accompanying it are test tubes of red-beet powder, artichoke powder, and "an herb infusion." You find yourself dumping them moodily, like vials of pretty sand. Strangely, though, you wouldn't mind coming back. (Open Thursdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner, Mondays through Wednesdays for dinner. Entrées $19-$27.)

—Lauren Collins



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
TIME AND TIDE

At a modern-dance concert, you can often tell right away which of the performers is the choreographer. It's the oldest person on the stage. Most dancers have to retire around age forty, but of course the company

director is exempt. "I didn't want to do that piece," says John Jasperse, who is forty-three. "You know—the piece with the solo for the aging choreographer in the middle of a dance done by twenty-year-olds." So his new work, "Becky, Jodi and John," which will open on Wednesday at Dance Theatre Workshop, is a trio for himself and two other forty-three-year-olds, Becky Hilton and Jodi Melnick, both longtime colleagues of his. Jasperse's past shows have been pretty raw: lots of nudity and tangled bodies. The keynote was exposure, discomfort. "Becky" will be different, he says. "Don't get me wrong—we're not becoming all warm and sweet. But when you're young there's a huge disparity between what you want to do and what you actually get to do, and a lot of frustration. This piece is about saying, 'Here's where we've ended up,' and celebrating that."

—Joan Acocella

INTRÍNGULIS
LAByrinth Theatre Company presents a solo show by Carlo Alban, an Ecuadorian immigrant who portrays a menagerie of characters. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through April 9.)

JACK GOES BOATING
In Bob Glaudini's play (a LAByrinth production, directed by Peter DuBois), the cast members are always in doubt about what they feel. Jack (the riveting Philip Seymour Hoffman), a limousine driver, exists at first in an almost autistic solitude, cut off by a fearfulness that he can't articulate but by which he is transparently punished. His best and only friends—Clyde (John Ortiz) and his wife, Lucy (Daphne Rubin-Vega)—set him up with the shy, fragile Connie (the poignant Beth Cole). While the play unpersuasively tracks the distrust in Clyde and Lucy's fraught relationship, it is successful in exploring Jack's and Connie's tentative progress toward trust. In the slow acquisition of poise, Hoffman makes a thrilling spectacle of the battle between trepidation and validation. (4/2/07) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

LA MAGNANI
Theresa Gambacorta wrote and performs this portrait of the Italian film star Anna Magnani. (ArcLight, 152 W. 71st St. 212-279-4200.)

THE NIBROC TRILOGY
Three plays by Arlene Hutton center on the life of a Kentucky couple from the Second World War to the fifties. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE NUMBER 14
The Vancouver-based Axis Theatre Company brings back its popular physical-theatre show, performed with masks and clowning, about the passengers on a city bus. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

OLIVER TWIST
Theatre for a New Audience presents Neil Bartlett's adaptation of the Dickens novel. Bartlett also directs. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, at John Jay College, 899 Tenth Ave. 212-279-4200.)

SOME MEN
Using a same-sex wedding as a framing device, Terrence McNally's comedy is a multigenerational survey of gay history, set in bathhouses, hospital wards, and all the well-travelled corners of the gay-drama globe. McNally's emphasis is on the cultural fault lines within the community: aging show queens meet gender-studies majors from Vassar; a drag singer (the wonderfully arch David Greenspan) winds up at a preppy piano bar in the heat of the Stonewall riots. The ensemble cast, directed by Trip Cullman, finds the fun in McNally's script, but the actors can't give it what it lacks: a compelling point of view. In the end, all McNally bothers to say about gay life is that it sure has changed. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

STAY
The première of Lucy Thurber's story of a young writer who discovers an angel. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

TALL GRASS
A triptych of dark comedic vignettes about relationships, by Brian Harris. Directed by Nick Corley. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING
Vanessa Redgrave stars in Joan Didion's stage adaptation of her memoir. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

CHICKEN: Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444. Through April 7. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **DEFENDER OF THE FAITH:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **HOWARD KATZ:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **JOURNEY'S END:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **KING HEDLEY II:** Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. **MY TRIP TO AL-QAEDA:** Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. **PRELUDE TO A KISS:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **PROMETHEUS BOUND:** Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101. **SPALDING GRAY: STORIES LEFT TO TELL:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-7171. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TALK RADIO:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 6: In 1965, a tornado of a singer named **Koko Taylor** blew the roof off of Chicago's fabled Chess Records studios with "Wang Dang Doodle," her classic duet with Willie Dixon. These days, she can still shake a rafter or two.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 4: **Sons and Daughters**, from Glasgow, feature two former associates of the melancholic Scottish outfit Arab Strap. They made their début in 2003 with an E.P., "Love the Cup," that paid tribute to Johnny Cash and embraced the big, bad American West. They maintain the Man in Black's hard-edged attitude on their most recent album, "The Repulsion Box." April 5: The Philadelphia favorites **Dr. Dog** deliver skewed, organ-driven retro rock. The band's new album is called "We All Belong." April 6-7 and April 9: The chiming guitar work, jittery drumming, and barroom piano playing of Los Angeles's **Cold War Kids.**

CARNEGIE HALL
57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—April 5: A tribute to Bruce Springsteen, with **Jewel, Badly Drawn Boy, the Bacon Brothers, Josh Ritter, Steve Earle, Pete Yorn,** and others.

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St.—**Mrnorth,** local rockers with a Hibernian lineage, apply an arena-ready approach to eternally enticing subjects, such as those encapsulated in the title of their sophomore album, "Fear & Desire." They're here April 5, celebrating its release with the help of the Greenwich Village Orchestra. (For information about tickets, visit www.mrnorthmusic.com.)

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—April 9: Sweden's **Teddybears** play giddy electronic dance rock, borrowing liberally from several genres without ever taking themselves too seriously. (The fact that they are known to wear big furry bear heads underscores the point.) Their U.S. début album, "Soft Machine," includes cameos from the likes of Iggy Pop, Neneh Cherry, and the reggae vocalist Mad Cobra, which certainly says that some people are taking them seriously.

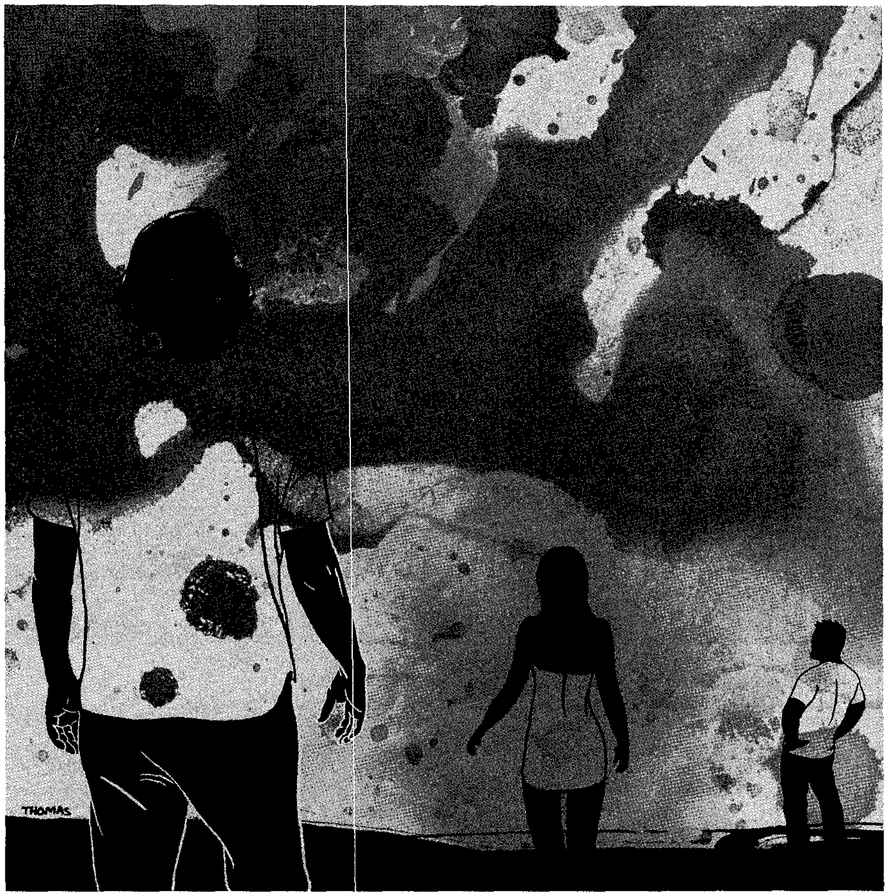
IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—April 3: **Butch Walker** left his post fronting the chart-grazing modern-rock band Marvelous 3 to produce songs for Avril Lavigne, Simple Plan, the Donnas, and many other artists, but he hasn't given up on living the rock-and-roll life. In fact, he glamorizes it to great effect with his songs full of sex and glitter. April 9: While Mike Patton is still best known for his work with the nineties alternative-metal heroes Faith No More (who disbanded in 1998), the wildly versatile vocalist has always had a number of lower-profile projects going. Between fronting the ferocious Tomahawk, the conceptually brutal Fantomas, and the lounge-ready Lovage and maintaining a strenuously experimental solo career, Patton has remained a busy man. His most recent project, **Peeping Tom,** is an eclectic collaborative effort. Working with everyone from the eccentric rapper Kool Keith to the mellow jazz-pop songbird Norah Jones (and getting her to talk dirty, no less, on the track "Sucker"), Patton's Peeping Tom is by far his most ambitious project to date.

THE KITCHEN
512 W. 19th St. (212-255-5793, ext. 11)—April 4: The **Joshua Light Show.** In the sixties, the multimedia artist **Joshua White** created psychedelic light shows for performances at the Fillmore East by Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, and other icons of rock and roll. Since those heady days, White has worked in television, directed Laurie Anderson's video "O Superman," and gone on to create a new light show with the artist Gary Panter. Here, he leads a team of video artists in an improvisatory visual performance, accompanied by the music of **Delia Gonzalez** and **Gavin Russom,** a pair of fine artists who also build their own analog synthesizers.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—April 5: The Montreal trio **Land of Talk,** which is fronted by the vocalist Elizabeth Powell, traffics in jagged, occasionally dreamy rock.

UNITED PALACE
4140 Broadway, at 175th St. (212-207-7171)—April 9: A good three decades after they fell apart in a haze of drug-fuelled chaos, the **Stooges**—the cornerstone upon which the church of punk rock was built—defied all expectations and re-formed in 2003. The iconic front man Iggy Pop reunited with the brothers Ron and Scott Asheton of the original lineup and recruited the ex-Minutemen bassist, Mike Watt, to fill in for the late Dave Alexander. Four years after their humble return (in stark contrast to the high-profile fanfare of, say, the Police reunion), the Stooges have recorded their first album since they broke up, "The Weirdness," picking up right where their classic third album, "Raw Power," from 1973, left off.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—April 6: The ghostly Duluth trio **Low** drops by with songs from its latest dyspeptic album, "Drums and Guns." April 7: The Norwegian singer **Sondre Lerche** is young—he released his major-label début, "Faces Down," from 2002, before he reached legal drinking age (at least in this country)—but he's already had a varied career. That record was full of sparkling pop confections. Last year's album, "The Duper Sessions," is a collection of acoustic jazz songs. His latest release, "Phantom Punch," moves back toward the reckless rock usually associated with someone his age.



The Joshua Light Show, an improvisational multimedia performance, at the Kitchen.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—April 3-8: **Jim Hall** and **Ron Carter.** Any suggestions that jazz was stagnating in the seventies are laid to rest by "Alone Together," the 1972 live duet album with the guitarist Hall and the bassist Carter. The two giants are still at the top of their game, and their intimate interaction is always a joy to hear.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—April 3-28: **Keely Smith.** The wild man Louis Prima's onetime sidekick ensconced in the tony Café Carlyle? Not to worry: Smith, the eye within the Prima gang's storm, mixes her swinging mirth with expressive ballads that point to where her artistic heart lies.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—April 3-8: The Chilean vocalist **Claudia Acuña** refracts standards and Latin material through a contemporary prism.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—April 5-8: The jazz master **Pat Martino** personifies an era when guitar stylists found inspiration in the soulful elegance of Wes Montgomery as well as the modal excursions of John Coltrane and Miles Davis. Time may have taken the edge off his exploratory impulses, but Martino remains a crafty classicist. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—April 5-6: The pianist Misha Mengelberg and the drummer Han Bennink, dogged straddlers of the thin line between musical genius and madness, celebrate the fortieth anniversary of their equally unclassifiable, ten-piece **ICP (Instant Composers Pool) Orchestra.** Among the band's exceptional, if gloriously unruly soloists are Michael Moore, on woodwinds, and Tristan Honsinger, on cello.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 3-8: The drummer **Paul Motian's** passion for electric guitars and horns reaches new heights with an octet featuring three guitarists and two saxophonists. Expect the ensemble sound, as demonstrated on last year's vivid album "Garden of Eden," to be a balance of orchestral detail and enticingly evanescent atmosphere. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Barcelona and Modernity: Gaudí to Dalí."** Through June 3. ♦ **"Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall: An Artist's Country Estate."** Through May 20. ♦ **"Discovering Tutankhamun: The Photographs of Harry Burton."** Through April 29. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Closed Circuit: Video and New Media at the Metropolitan."** The Met began collecting video in 2001, which is to say, very late in the game. A mini-survey of its holdings features eight artists—Darren Almond, Lutz Bacher, Omer Fast, Ann Hamilton, David Hammons, Maria Marshall, Jim Campbell, and Wolfgang Staehle. A meditative paradigm pervades, whether in Staehle's fixed-camera view of a classic Hudson River School vista; or in Bacher's edit of months of footage shot in 1997 and 1998 in the Pat Hearn gallery, as the beloved dealer, who was dying of cancer, went about her business; or in Hammons's darkly comic "Phat Free," in which the artist kicks the bucket—literally, along a New York street. Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Armando Reverón"** is a beguiling retrospective of a Venezuelan painter, hardly known in North America, who died in 1954, at the age of sixty-five. Through April 16. ♦ **"Artistic Collaborations: Fifty Years at Universal Limited Art Editions."** Tatyana Grosman founded the U.L.A.E. workshop, on Long Island, in 1957; in the years since, hundreds of artists—among them Susan Rothenberg, Jasper Johns, Barnett Newman, Kiki Smith, and Richard Tuttle—have made prints with the master craftsmen there. Through May 21. ♦ **"Live/Work: Performance Into Drawing."** Through May 21. ♦ **"Jeff Wall,"** a mid-career survey of the Canadian photographer's work. Through May 14. ♦ **"Comic Abstraction: Image Making, Image Breaking."** Through June 11. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—Tacita Dean's connection with cinema runs deep: she is related to two former production heads of Britain's Ealing Studios. The work that earned her the 2006 Hugo Boss Prize takes film in a direction different from that of narrative or feature filmmaking, exploring concerns like light, and the passing relevance of celluloid in the digital era. "Kodak" features a French film factory on the verge of closing, and "Noir et Blanc" is made with the last rolls of 16-mm. film that Dean was able to procure from that manufacturer. Photographic film functions almost like painting in "Majesty (Portrait)," a work in which details surrounding a tree are blocked out, while "Found Obsolescence," a bit of film found in the sprockets of a machine in the French factory, serves as a kind of eulogy for the medium.

LEFT: JACOB THOMAS; RIGHT: JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
STRAUSS IN SPACE

Rarities are often rare for a reason. "Die Ägyptische Helena," one of the most obscure of Richard Strauss's fifteen operas, is playing now at the Metropolitan Opera, and even Straussophiles are struggling to love it. The libretto, by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, is a goofy mythological grab bag about Helen of Troy's trip to an island near Egypt. The music promises to be lush, but sags. The production, by David Fielding, mixes tacky surrealism with an outer-space aesthetic that one Internet wag dubbed "Topeka Planetarium." Fortunately, there's Deborah Voigt in the title role, showing off her newly Helenic physique and her newly tensile, emotionally pointed soprano. Opposite her is Diana Damrau, balancing upper-register brilliance with chesty lyric warmth. Fabio Luisi gets red-blooded sounds from the orchestra. But why waste time on weak Strauss when so many other major works have never had their day at the Met? Start with Franz Schreker's bewitching "Der Ferne Klang," which the American Symphony performs on April 15.

—*Alex Ross*

Through June 6. ♦ **"Family Pictures."** Through April 16. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure."** Through June 3. ♦ **"Lorna Simpson."** Through May 6. ♦ Terence Koh's one-room work comprises a single four-thousand-watt bulb in a lamp pointed at viewers, a withering assault on the senses. Through May 27. ♦ **"Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art opened on March 23, with a permanent installation of Judy Chicago's **"The Dinner Party"** and two inaugural exhibits, **"Global Feminisms"** and **"Pharaohs, Queens, and Goddesses."** ♦ **"The Eye of the Artist: The Work of Devorah Sperber."** Through May 6. ♦ **"Landscapes from the Age of Impressionism."** Through May 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Glass, Gilding, and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642)."** An examination of Iran's last pre-Islamic empire through its opulent courtly art. "Iran" here serves as shorthand for a much larger territory, since the Sasanians also ruled over present-day Iraq, Afghanistan, eastern Turkey, and several other neighboring lands. Silver, textiles, and mosaics bear images honoring rulers and the dead and give insight into the infrastructure of an empire. The two areas in which the exhibition runs deepest are glass vessels (and other glass objects like a mysterious iridescent blue tube, possibly made to hold rolled documents) and intricately crafted agate and chalcedony seals used for everything from personal identification to religious certification. A nifty audio tour of the seals, accessed by visitors' cell phones, provides a glimpse not just into the past but perhaps into the future of museum education. Through May 20. ♦ **"Yuken Teruyu: Free Fish."** Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"George Stubbs (1724-1806): A Celebration."** Horses signify as luxury items these days, companions and sporting partners for the wealthy. For the Liverpool painter George Stubbs, they were modes of transportation and metaphors for the nature-culture dichotomy: the rider controlled the horse the way the rational brain controlled the body's unruly passions. In addition to racehorses and field horses, the menagerie here includes hounds, moose, an ox, and a monkey, all carefully observed. These generally serene pictures demonstrate both Stubbs's mastery of animal subjects and the enduring British taste for images of rural life, even—or, one should say, particularly—when the industrial revolution was fast approaching. Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"High Times, Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975."** Through April 22. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Jonas Mekas: The Beauty of Friends Being Together Quartet."** Four video "quartets" gleaned from thousands of hours of footage; forty photographic portraits blown up from individual film frames; forty stills of New York City in various guises; forty sequences from an ongoing film-a-day project called "365"—Mekas's elegiac installation is a Noah's ark of sixties cool. The sense of flowing, shot-by-shot abundance that defines "Diarist Cinema" belies any notion of squareness or sharp edges. As usual, the through line is the epic cast of characters that the filmmaker counts as friends: Andy Warhol, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, George Maciunas, Stan Brakhage, Nam June Paik, and SoHo itself. Through April 23. ♦ **"Not for Sale,"** a gathering of art that, for what-

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ever reason, its makers would not consider converting into cash. The show includes work by Shahzia Sikander, Luis Gispert, Maya Lin, Jasper Johns, and Stephen Shore, among others. Through April 30. ♦ **"Vik Muniz: Reflex."** Through May 7. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

"AUTOCHROMES: THE DAWN OF COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY"
This group of delicately colored images from the early nineteen-hundreds might not excite fans of William Eggleston, Nan Goldin, Andreas Gursky, or the other contemporary photographers who have made color work ubiquitous. But grainy, glass-plate autochromes, the results of the first widespread color process, still convey a sense of discovery. Because their makers were seeing the world anew, even ordinary sights are captivating. Backlit and glowing like miniature Jeff Walls are pictures of an Alpine lake, a Hopi basket weaver, grapes spilling from a pail, a bowl of violets, Alfred Stieglitz's daughter, Kitty, and a French officer's jacket, whose insignia were apparently used as a test color bar. Through April 6. (Kraus, 962 Park Ave., at 82nd St. 212-794-2064.)

"FOR A SPECIAL PLACE: DOCUMENTS AND WORKS FROM THE GENERALI FOUNDATION COLLECTION"
The Vienna-based Generali Foundation of the EA-Generali insurance group has an enviable collection of conceptual and video art, with works by Hans Haacke, Isa Genzken, Valie Export, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, and Franz West. In a case of benefactor self-reflexivity—or narcissism?—many of the works refer to office and corporate culture. Hans Hollein's "Mobile Office," a pneumatically powered bell-jar-shaped space, comes complete with a typewriter and telephone. Maria Eichhorn's projects include setting up a commune-style bank account in Japan and exploring the finances of the Kunsthalle Bern. Andrea Fraser even put the Generali Foundation itself under a microscope, interviewing employees—the supposed benefactors of this corporate art collection—whose reactions to various art installations range from irritation to rage. Through May 3. (Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)

Short List

LEE BONTECOU: Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through April 28. **ROBERT RYMAN:** Pace-Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through April 7.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KAREN AZOULAY / ROBERT SEYDEL
Burrowing into the pop-detritus archive somewhere between Ray Johnson's mail art and Tom Phillips's "Humument" project, Seydel's serial collage "The Book of Saul" describes an allusive fantasy about his aunt and alter ego Ruth Greisman, her brother, Saul, and their escapades with Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp. Another series is more abstract, mixing marks in oil, ink, and pencil with scraps of papers from Turkey and Greece, but it, too, unfolds in novelistic rhythms; one can see Seydel's appeal to the guest curator and poet Peter Gizzi. In the adjacent gallery, the Toronto native Azoulay (chosen by the guest curator Glenn Ligon) imagines pageants of rivers and fireworks as handmade Las Vegas-esque sets. Through April 21. (Cue, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-3583.)

TANYTH BERKELEY
Although Berkeley's photographs of women, men, and a few transgender individuals are mostly about the power of untraditional beauty, they also flirt shamelessly with the grotesque. The artist says she was thinking about Goya and Dürer when she photographed passersby in Times Square last summer. The result is a fascinating, Fellini-esque sequence of a hundred and sixty small, unframed snapshots of faces both haunted and haunting. An installation of larger work, collectively titled "The Muse," is organized around several contemporary caryatids: life-size, full-length portraits of figures whose strikingly idiosyncratic looks overturn the usual rules of attraction. Through April 14. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 212-929-5959.)

MITCH EPSTEIN
At nearly six by eight feet, Epstein's new color photographs are the biggest he's shown so far, and not every image lives up to its ambitious scale. But those that do are spectacular, often in the most understated way. Epstein's subject is "American Power," meaning our use and misuse of energy, so pictures of suburban power plants and gorgeous, baroque plumes of coal smoke are placed alongside shots of the sculptural wreckage left behind by Hurricane Katrina. In Biloxi, a ruined tree festooned with debris becomes a magnificent surrealist object. Things may be spinning out of control, but Epstein has rarely had a surer sense of his material. Through April 7. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

KAREL FUNK
You may initially wonder what you're doing in front of one of Funk's paintings, staring at the back or profile of a young man dressed in a stylish anorak. The artist's objective soon becomes self-evident, however: these are exercises in painting and looking in which the subject, represented with meticulously applied layers of translucent acrylic, is less important than the act of painting and its subsequent effects. Funk's work has been compared to fifteenth-century Northern European painting, with its jewel-like, glowing theatrics, and to Photo-Realism. It actually forges its own path, showing how painting can be a conceptual exercise, a thought piece about contemporary art and materialism activated not through dry texts or austere, grainy photographs, but via age-old strategies criticized by artists like Duchamp for being too "retinal." Through April 7. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

ANDREAS GEFELLER
This Düsseldorf-based photographer's U.S. début is full of huge aerial images (some almost nine feet wide) that appear entirely abstract from across the room. But on closer inspection a green field is grass dotted with thousands of white golf balls, and a brown one is a hive of yellow feeding stations surrounded by fuzzy baby chicks. Gefeller shoots from slightly above the ground and digitally cobbles together his final images from hundreds of smaller photos. The best of the bunch aren't merely clever feats; they suggest a combination of alien surveillance and instant anthropological dig. What does the debris left behind at a Hong Kong racetrack reveal about modern civilization? Through April 14. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006.)

JOHANNES VANDERBEEK
Zach Feuer's gallery is at the center of a rage among young art-school-trained practitioners of a canny, studied version of faux-naïf aesthetics. The latest installment comes from VanDerBeek, a Cooper Union grad whose sculptures of crude figures and architectural structures made from glued-together *Time*, *Life*, and *National Geographic* magazines are an exercise both in populist media recycling and neo-folk art. A bush made with wax, metal, and wood and a triangular bed with ten pillows cradling heads shaped out of cotton wool add a fairy-tale element to a strain of art already rife with calculated fantasy and wonder. Through April 7. (530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

Short List

JULIE EVANS / SALLY GALL: Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Through May 5. **NAN GOLDIN:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through April 14. **JUSTINE KURLAND:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through April 7. **LORI NIX:** Jenkins Johnson, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-0707. Through April 21. **JORGE PARDO:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through April 21.

DVD NOTES TO LIFE

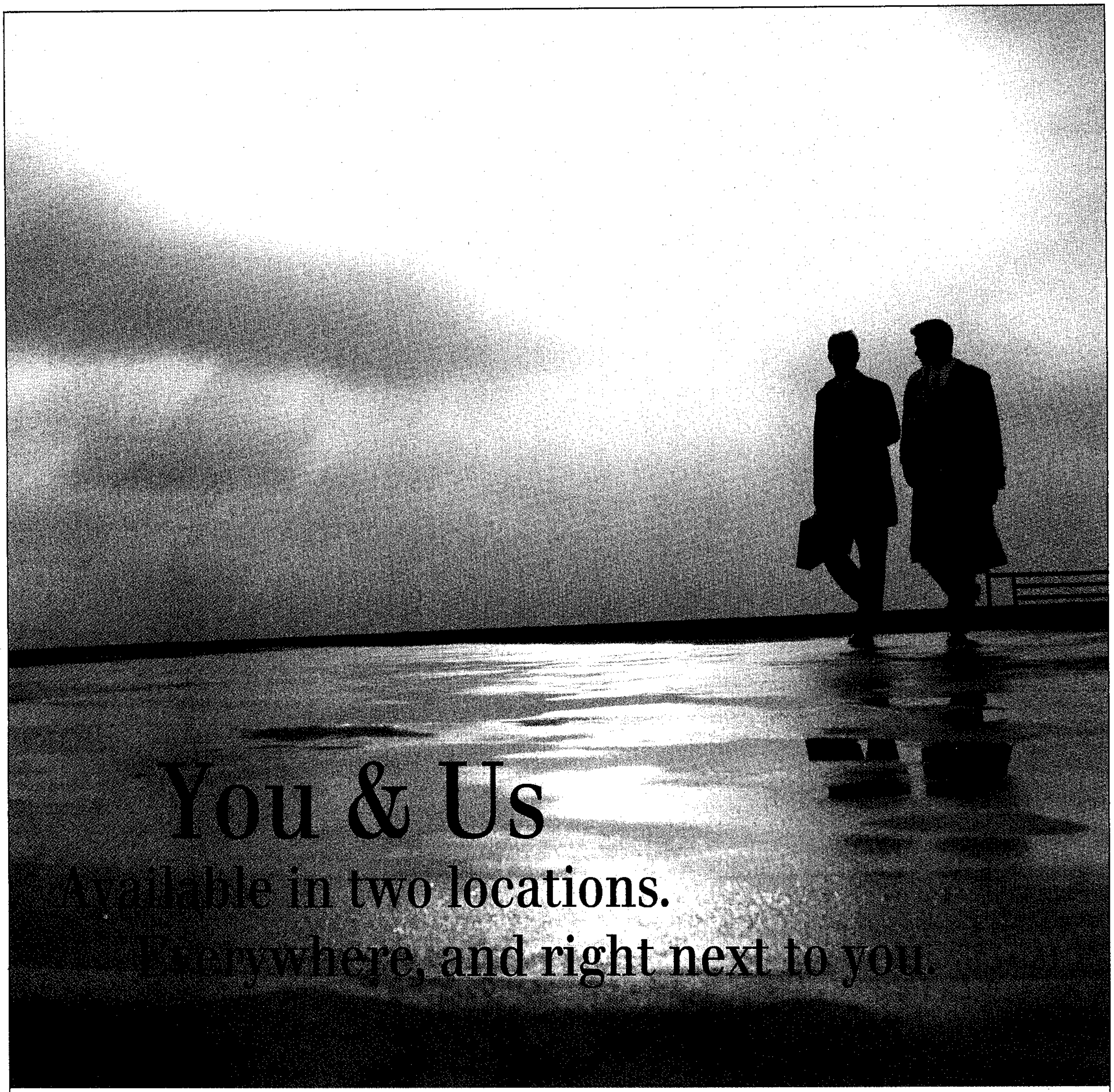
Ingmar Bergman, the cinema's favorite poet of misery, struggled endlessly with the aftereffects of his harsh religious upbringing. But he was also fond of struggling with family, friends, lovers, colleagues, and himself, and the films in a new boxed set, **"Early Bergman"** (Criterion Eclipse), show the anguish that was present in his films from the start.

The titles alone of his earliest works, "Torment" and "Crisis," both featured here, suggest his career's harrowing bent. Bergman's fifth film, "Port of Call," from 1948, begins with the suicide attempt of a troubled young woman, Berit (Nine-Christine Jönsson), who has recently been released from a reformatory to the home of her harshly judgmental mother and a hard job in a factory. She begins an affair with a cynical stevedore (Bengt Eklund), which leads to conflict with everyone around her—including the authorities, who seek to have her locked up again. Berit can hardly bear her glimmer of happiness for fear that it will end, and scenes of unredeemable pain—as when her friend Gertrud endures the results of a botched back-alley abortion—are filmed in intrusively intimate closeups that suggest Bergman's ardor for the agonies they convey.

"To Joy," from 1950, takes its cruelly ironic title from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. This drama begins with a violinist in a provincial orchestra, Stig Ericsson (Stig Olin), receiving news of his wife's death and continues with a lengthy flashback showing how their miserable marriage led to her awful end. An ambitious musician whose dreams crumble before his eyes, Stig offers a fearsome artistic credo that could stand as Bergman's own: "I'll tell you the secret of real art. It's created when you're unhappy. I prefer being unhappy. God knows it's the state I usually find myself in."

The Korean director Hong Sangsoo, born in 1960, offers self-deprecating portrayals of desperate quests for hard experience which resemble Bergman's own. **"Woman Is the Future of Man"** (New Yorker Video), from 2004, features two young men, Hunjoon, a lonely filmmaker who has just returned from studying in the United States, and Munho, a married art professor, who set off on a journey to locate their former lover, Sunhwa. Hong's tense, long wide-angle shots suggest his avid desire for reality, which mainly takes the form of suffering: sexual hookups replace emotional fulfillment, and personal bonds are a source of misunderstanding and conflict. These tussles, however, are the moments when Hong's characters feel most alive.

—*Richard Brody*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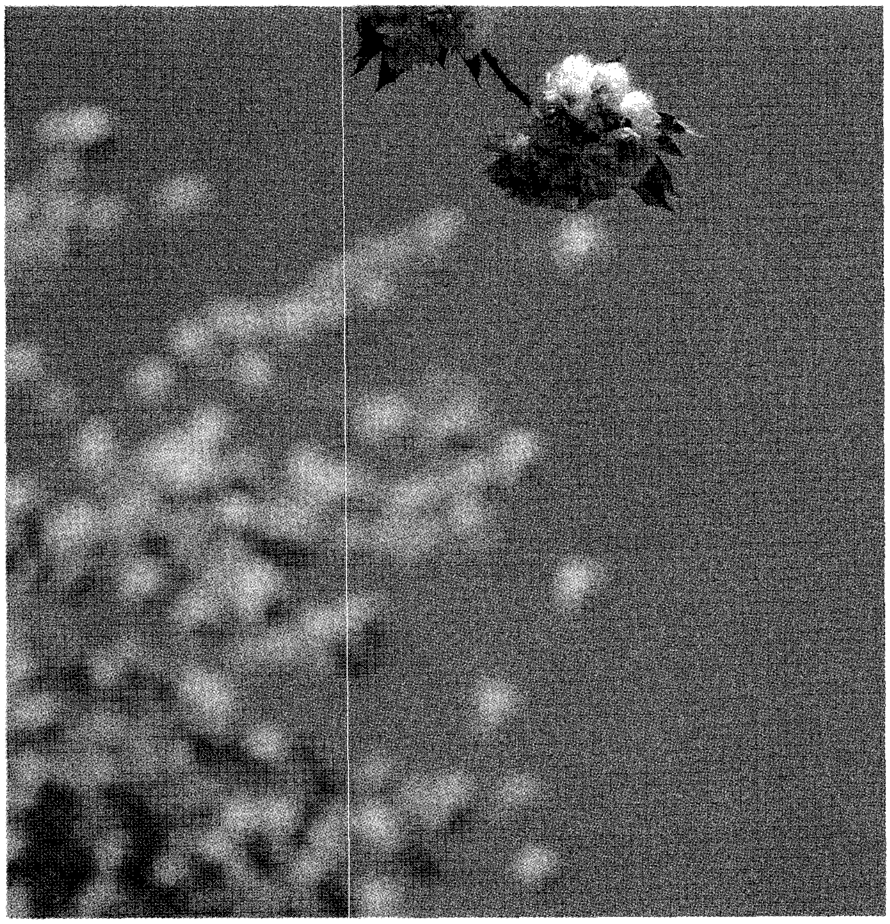
GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

"INTELLIGENT DESIGN"
When the nineties and the aughts get into history books, at least a sidebar will be devoted to "systems" art—the mostly abstract, faintly cartoonish work in any medium that concerns itself with networks, rhizomes, simulacra, and circuits. "Intelligent Design" seeks, with modest success, to link this not-new phenomenon to spirituality (or to its absence). A pair of watercolors by Judy Blanco has quiet charm; Sanford Biggers's mirrored assemblage has trashy chutzpah. Elana Herzog contributes one of her negative murals, in which cloth is stapled to the wall, then ripped away until only a threadbare grid remains. With works by Rico Gatson, Ellie Murphy, and ten others. Through April 9. (Momenta, 359 Bedford Ave. 718-218-8058.)



Recent photographs taken by Sally Gall in Central Park are on view at Saul gallery.

DANCE

BALLET MEMPHIS
The fourteen-member ensemble celebrates its twentieth anniversary with a weeklong stint at the Joyce, its first. The two alternating programs feature ballets by the company's playful and prolific young resident choreographer, Trey McIntyre. "The Naughty Boy"—that would be Cupid—is a blissful frolic set to Mozart's Third Violin Concerto, while "In Dreams" is a darker piece set to Roy Orbison ballads. The company's commitment to Southern culture is embodied by two narrative ballets by Julia Adam, inspired by the writing of Eudora Welty and Kate Chopin, and the New York-based Thaddeus Davis provides an urban edge with his striking "Mercurial Balance." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 3-4 at 7:30, April 5-6 at 8, April 7 at 2 and 8, and April 8 at 2.)

JOHN JASPERSE COMPANY
John Jasperse, Jodi Melnick, and Becky Hilton met as dancers twenty years ago. Which means that, as dancers, they're getting old. "Becky, Jodi and John," Jasperse's new work for the three of them, looks at how they've changed over the years and how they haven't, laughing all the way. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 4-5 and April 7 at 7:30 and April 6 at 7:30 and 10.)

ELLIS WOOD DANCE
Wood's all-female company was seen last summer by hundreds of Wall Streeters on their lunch break as they writhed and twisted in endless lengths of red tulle among the Ionic columns that line the balcony of the Cipriani Building. Wood is a visceral choreographer, unafraid to use words like "female energy," and, at Dance New Amsterdam—where she is an artist-in-residence—she will be exploring just that in her "Firewalling" (a new version of the Cipriani piece), as well as the fear of truly independent thought in her most recent work, "Flat Affect." (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. April 4-7 at 8.)

RUMBATAP
Max Pollak was born in Austria, honed his tap skills in New York clubs, then crossed that American art with the traditions of Cuba to create RumbaTap. He takes the polymetric rhythms ordinarily shared by an entire percussion section and plays them across his body—raising the difficulty of rubbing your stomach while patting your head exponentially. To this, for his evening-length work "Viis," he adds storytelling. And not just any story, but the Finnish epic "Kalevala," in which he finds parallels between its characters and the Afro-Cuban pantheon. The original music, played by musicians who take roles in the tale, mixes the chanting of Finnish bards with Afro-Cuban drumbeats transferred to saxophone. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. April 5-8 at 8.)

NORA CHIPAUMIRE
651 Arts' performance series "Salon 651" concludes with an evening of solos by the Zimbabwe-born Chipaumire, known for her recent appearances with Urban Bush Women. The three dances include "Black Swan," a riff on the expiring fowl that Pavlova made famous. (BRIC Studio, 57 Rockwell Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4181. April 5 at 8.)

KEIGWIN KABARET
Larry Keigwin's smartly produced cabaret evenings playfully combine contemporary dance with burlesque. In this installment, part of Symphony Space's "Gender Benders" series, recent pop-song dance-portraits by Keigwin alternate with guest appearances by the cross-dressing neo-burlesque performer Howling Vic and the novelist, monologuist, and multimedia satirist Mike Albo. The ubiquitous Murray Hill hosts. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 5-7 at 8:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Strauss's **"Die Ägyptische Helena,"** with Deborah Voigt, Diana Damrau, and Torsten Kerl; Fabio Luisi conducts. (April 4 at 8 and April 7 at 8:30.) ♦ The Met's **"Turandot"** needs big voices to match the spacious architecture and elaborate bric-a-brac of Zeffirelli's renowned production. Andrea Gruber and Richard Margison will take the roles of the Ice Princess and her suitor Calaf, with Hei-Kyung Hong in the role of Liù; Richard Armstrong. (April 5 and April 9 at 8.) ♦ So many of Handel's operas are produced so often these days that it's worth pointing out that **"Giulio Cesare,"** for decades one of the only Handel operas that the big companies would touch, still reigns supreme. The Met's revival of its 1988 production features a dazzling array of vocal talent, including Ruth Ann Swenson, Alice Coote, and David Daniels, with the mezzo-soprano Patricia Bardon and the countertenor Lawrence Zazzo making their débuts; Harry Bicket. (April 6 and April 10 at 7:30.) ♦ The revival of Giordano's **"Andrea Chénier,"** one of the more dignified of the great verismo favorites, features the estimable Ben Heppner, Violeta Urmana, and Mark Delavan in the leading roles. Yet Sharon Thomas's lively staging of Nicolas Joël's 1996 production is more notable for the solidity of the over-all contributions of its firmly professional cast, in addition to the fresh and attentive conducting of Marco Armiliato. It's rewarding to see this star vehicle turned into an effective ensemble piece, but it may take the return of a typically sensual Chénier—José Cura? Marcelo Álvarez?—to make this opera really sizzle again. (April 7 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
City Opera's acclaimed production of **"Flavio,"** a diverting tragicomedy in Handel's lighter vein, returns with the countertenor David Walker in the title role, joined by such singers as Marguerite Krull, Kathryn Allyn, and Gerald Thompson; William Lacey, a British newcomer, conducts. (April 4 and April 10 at 7:30, April 6 at 8, and April 8 at 1:30.) ♦ What is a Scottish maiden to do when she is wooed by her father's enemy? Rossini's touching opera seria **"La Donna del Lago"**—based on Walter Scott's epic poem "The Lady of the Lake"—may be billed as an illustration of the conflict between love and duty, but its long set pieces and static structure can make it feel like something rather less exciting. The elegant British tenor Barry Banks is the thwarted but ultimately generous suitor, with the velvety-voiced Alexandrina Pendatchanska as Elena, the object of his affection. The role of Malcolm, Elena's true love, is sung by the exciting young dramatic mezzo-soprano Laura Vlasak Nolen; George Manahan. (April 5 at 7:30 and April 7 at 8. These are the final performances.) ♦ A new cast adds its talents to the fine Mark Lamos production of **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Shu-Ying Li, Keri Alkema, Christopher Jackson, and Marco Nisticó; Atsushi Yamada. (April 7 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

BAM: "THE MAGIC FLUTE"
Repertory opera doesn't come to the Brooklyn Academy of Music without some kind of radical twist. This version of Mozart's singspiel is notable for a striking production (which originated at Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie) by the South African

artist and director William Kentridge, featuring nineteenth-century costumes, twenty-first-century video projections, and the eerily timeless charcoal drawings for which Kentridge is known. Piers Maxim conducts. (30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 9, April 11, and April 13-14 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA
Andrew Litton, having recently stepped down from twelve successful seasons at the Dallas Symphony, says howdy to New York by conducting the best of the conservatory's orchestras, a potent ensemble in the right hands. The program features music by Verdi, Walton (the Viola Concerto, with David Kim), and Strauss (the "Alpine Symphony"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. April 4 at 8.)

"CONCERTS AT THE CLOISTERS": POMERIUM
Alexander Blachly's admired early-music chorus offers a wide-ranging program of Renaissance music for Easter week (featuring works by Dufay, Gesualdo, Monteverdi, and Byrd) at Upper Manhattan's authentically medieval venue. (Fort Tryon Park. 212-650-2290. April 7 at 1 and 3.)

COLLEGIUM VOCALE GHENT: THE ST. JOHN PASSION
Philippe Herreweghe, a Belgian éminence grise of early music whose refined aesthetic has a delicious touch of Belle Époque elegance, leads his longtime chorus and ensemble in Bach's Eastertide masterwork. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. April 8 at 3.)

RECITALS

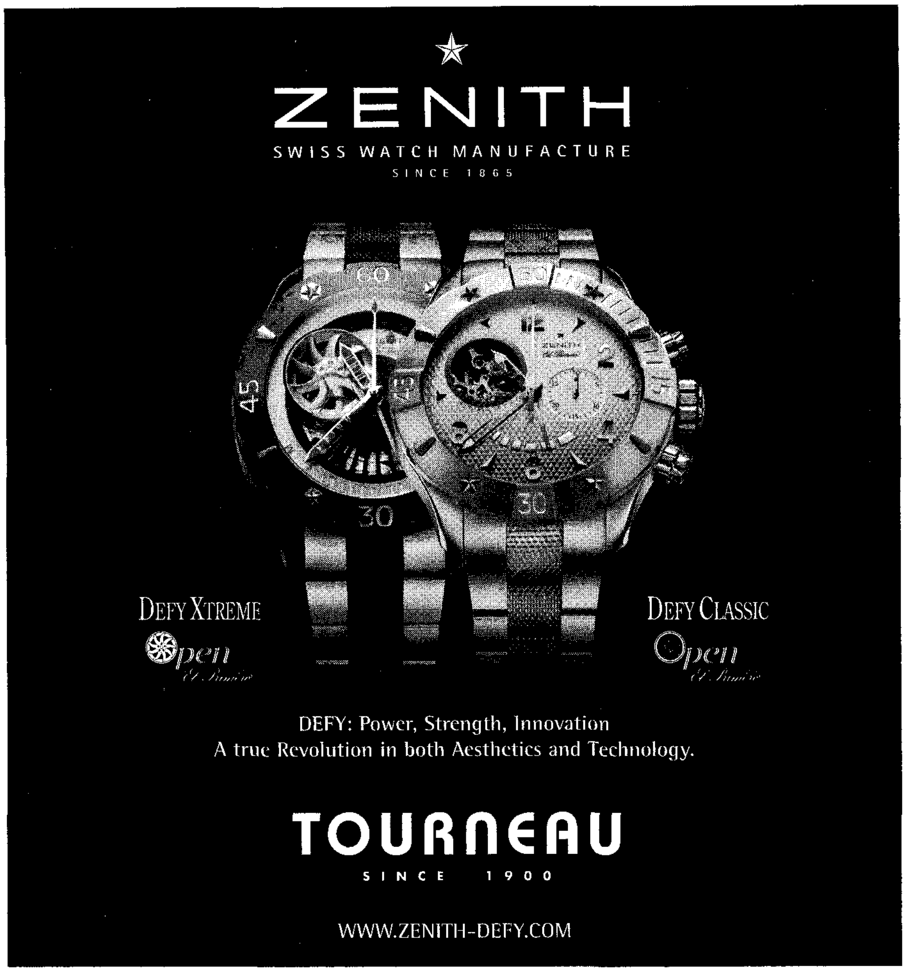
ALFRED BRENDEL
Europe's philosopher king of the keyboard is one of the few musicians so distinguished that they can avoid contemporary music without fear of ridicule. Nothing if not consistent, he offers works by Haydn, Beethoven (the luminous Sonata No. 31 in A-Flat Major), Schubert (the Impromptus in F Minor and B-Flat Major), and Mozart in what should be an absorbing evening at Carnegie Hall. (212-247-7800. April 4 at 8.)

BLAIR MCMILLEN
McMillen, one of New York's indispensable new-music pianists, offers a range of works—several inspired by Bach's Goldberg Variations—by such composers as Joan Tower, Steven Stucky, Barbara White, Fred Hersch, Marco Stroppa, and Derek Bermel. (Italian Academy, Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave. April 4 at 8. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 212-854-1623.)

WOLFGANG HOLZMAIR'S "WOLFIADE"
The richly expressive baritone, sponsored by the Austrian Cultural Forum, winds up a series of Hugo Wolf concerts with a rare complete performance of the "Spanisches Liederbuch," joined by the soprano Susanna Phillips and the mezzo-soprano Hermine Haselböck; Russell Ryan accompanies them. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. April 5 at 8. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-319-5300, ext. 222.)

NEW YORK WOODWIND QUINTET
The American première of the Cyprus-born composer Evis Sammoutis's "Metallaxis" is a highlight of the latest program by the city's front-rank wind group, which also features works by Bach, Nielsen, and Villa-Lobos. (Paul Hall, Juilliard School. April 5 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

BARGEMUSIC
April 5 at 8: The violinist Chin Kim and the pianist David Oei, a longtime New York duo, perform music by Stravinsky (the Divertimento), Chausson, Respighi, and Waxman (the "Carmen Fantasy"). ♦ April 8 at 4: "The Chess Game," a new, Lewis Carroll-inspired work by the Emmy-winning composer Gerald Fried (who scored such early Stanley Kubrick films as "The Killing" and "Paths of Glory"), is the capstone of a program by the New York Chamber Soloists (featuring the flutist Jennifer Grim, the violinist Curtis Macomber, and the cellist Adam Grabois) that also in-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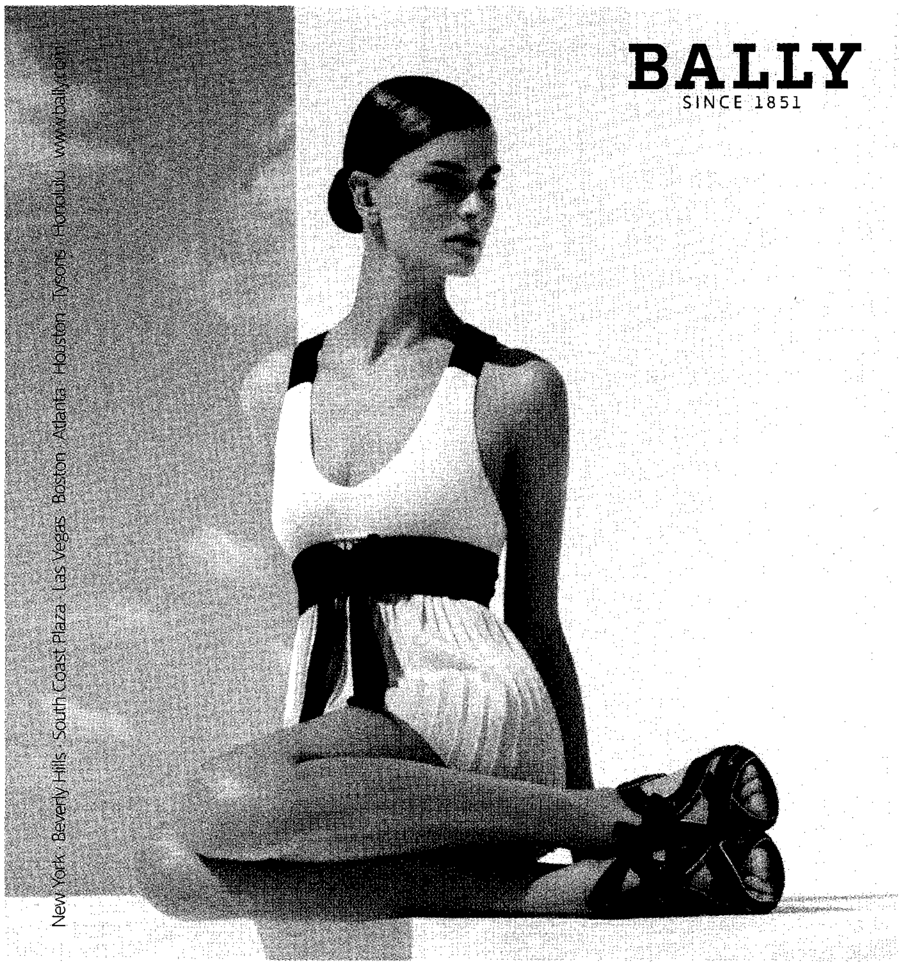
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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
INDECISION

In the late nineteen-nineties, the Belgian brothers David and Stephen Dewaele formed the rock band Soulwax, whose sound soon started to creep closer to dance music. In 2001, the Dewaeles began to moonlight as 2ManyDJs, early practitioners of what was soon known as the mash-up: one song laid over another. The 2ManyDJs album "As Heard on Radio Soulwax Pt. 2," from 2002, is the only legal full-length release in the genre (laws are different in Belgium), a blend of more than forty songs, including a sublime combination of the Breeders' "Cannonball" and Skee-Lo's 1995 rap "I Wish." In 2004, Soulwax released the tense "Any Minute Now," a dance album invested with the force, though not the sound, of rock. The Belgians are coming to New York to present a show called "Radio Soulwax," at Hiro Ballroom on April 17 and at the recently opened Brooklyn club Studio B on April 18. Soulwax will perform a set as a full band, and then the Dewaele brothers will reëmerge to close the evening on turntables. If you're not sure what kind of music you prefer, this will be a delightful way to find out.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

cludes music by Mozart and Bach ("The Musical Offering"). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. For a full listing of concerts, see www.bargemusic.org.)

"ABSOLUTE ARABIAN NIGHTS"
Kristjan Järvi's super-hip Absolute Ensemble teams up with the saxophonist Daniel Schnyder and a consort of Middle Eastern musicians for a concert exploring the shifting boundaries of classical, jazz, and world music. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-4100. April 7 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The Jens Nygaard tribute ensemble, which usually operates on the eccentric fringes of the repertory, offers a substantive concert featuring such works as Haydn's "London" Trio, Bartók's "Contrasts" (which the composer-pianist wrote for a performance with Benny Goodman and Joseph Szigeti), and Brahms's String Sextet in B-Flat Major. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. April 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

EUGENIA ZUKERMAN AND ANTHONY NEWMAN
The flutist and the pianist, two beloved New York artists, offer "Beethoven and Friends," a concert featuring the Master's Serenade in D Major along with pieces by Czerny, Mozart, and Kuhlau. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 51st St. 212-378-0248. April 10 at 7:30.)

SARAH CHANG
The radiant, big-toned American violinist adds the New York première of Richard Danielpour's "River of Light" to a recital that also includes Prokofiev's Sonata for Violin and Piano and the inevitable "Kreutzer" Sonata by Beethoven. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 10 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

ARE WE DONE YET?
Steve Carr directed this adaptation of "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House," from 1948, about a couple who move to the suburbs and have trouble with the contractor. Starring Ice Cube, Nia Long, and John C. McGinley. Opening April 4. (In wide release.)

THE BLACK BOOK
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 4. (In wide release.)

FIREHOUSE DOG
A comedy, directed by Todd Holland, about a canine movie star who gets lost and is taken in by a fire company. Opening April 4. (In wide release.)

GRINDHOUSE
Two action films, by Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez, paired as a faux double feature, in a tribute to the exploitation cinema of the nineteen-seventies. Starring Rose McGowan, Freddy Rodriguez, and Rosario Dawson. Opening April 6. (In wide release.)

THE HOAX
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 6. (In wide release.)

LOS MUERTOS
A drama, directed by Lisandro Alonso, about a man who is released from prison and searches for his daughter. In Spanish. Opening April 4. (Anthology Film Archives.)

THE REAPING
A thriller, directed by Stephen Hopkins, about a former missionary (Hilary Swank) who discovers the recurrence of the ten Biblical plagues. Opening April 5. (In wide release.)

THE TV SET
David Duchovny and Sigourney Weaver star in this comedy, about the making of a TV pilot. Written and directed by Jake Kasdan. Opening April 6. (Sunshine Cinema.)

WHOLE NEW THING
A comedy about a formerly home-schooled teen (Aaron Webber) who attends high school and develops a crush on a gay male teacher. Directed by Amnon Buchbinder. Opening April 6. (Quad Cinema.)

NOW PLAYING

AMAZING GRACE
Square but stirring. William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd), upon entering Parliament, in 1780, at the age of twenty-one, resolved, with the aid of his friend William Pitt (Benedict Cumberbatch), soon to be Prime Minister, at the age of twenty-four, to end the slave trade in the British Empire. Michael Apted's historical epic, from a screenplay by Steven Knight, starts in 1797, when Wilberforce, suffering from colitis and getting much rained on (every time he goes out, he's doused), is at a low ebb. He is saved by the attentions of Barbara Spooner (Romola Garai), a Gainsborough beauty with a luxurious pile of red hair and an exposed pale bosom. As the picture goes backward in time and then forward again, there are eloquent debates, much moral and physical anguish from Wilberforce, and a spirit of Christian resolve, attended, fortunately, by wit. Gruffudd has a serious brow, a wide smile, and romantically disordered locks, and, in the parliamentary scenes, he plants his feet and lets his voice ring out. With Albert Finney, Michael Gambon, the singer Youssou N'Dour, and the supercilious Rufus Sewell, who might have trouble stifling a smirk while reciting the Seven Last Words of Christ.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 3/5/07.) (In wide release.)

BLADES OF GLORY
This boisterous comedy, set in the milieu of competitive figure skating, concerns two rival skaters, Chazz Michael Michaels (Will Ferrell), a macho sex bomb, and Jimmy MacElroy (a memorably coiffed Jon Heder), a shy, sensitive finesse artist. Banned for life from their event after a knock-down, drag-out fight, they return from years of exile to compete as the first all-male pair. Unfortunately, the idea is better than the movie: the adventures on and off the ice, and the endless flow of innuendo (lots of crotch jokes and winking allusions to homosexuality), signify humor without actually being funny. It could have been otherwise. A platoon of screenwriters put lively characters in loopy situations with clever dialogue, but it's all thrown away by the rudderless direction of Will Speck and Josh Gordon, TV-commercial directors who make their feature début a series of half-minute sketches lacking rhythm and mood. Ferrell and Heder, as well as Will Arnett and Amy Poehler as Stranz and Fairchild Van Waldenberg, a villainous brother-and-sister pair, and the charmingly awkward Jenna Fischer as their lovestruck little sister, work so hard to put the material over that it's easy to overlook the sad truth.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

DARATT
The writer-director Mahamat-Saleh Haroun builds a visually austere parable (the title means "dry season") involving a young man, Atim (Ali Barkai), who is sent by his blind grandfather (the excellent Khayar Oumar Defallah) to avenge the death, during a forty-year civil war in Chad, of the father he never knew. He easily finds his target, a humble, aged baker of bread, and the confused Atim, while trying to muster the courage to fulfill his duty, becomes the man's protégé. Though the spare dialogue is largely made up of clichés, and despite the shaky acting, there are some beautiful, unfeigned moments—and the film's shrewd final coup de théâtre elegantly denotes a noble message of peace. In Arabic and French.—*Shauna Lyon* (BAM; April 6-10.)

HELLZAPOPPIN'
Beginning with a mischievous projectionist (Shemp Howard), this raucous, ridiculous, wildly inventive comedy, from 1941, packs more sight gags and metafictional madness into one film than could be expected, or for that matter, desired. Yet its central conceit, suggested by the title, carries a surprising, if unintended, metaphorical punch. The slapstick action is set in Hell and starts with a phalanx of chorus girls dropped from a stage set into an underworld that, in the light of history, is too disturbing to be funny. The Bosch-like tortures, played for laughs, include a gang of devils prodding newly arrived prisoners with pitchforks, women turning rotisserie-style over an open flame, and a couple dropped down a hole through which dark fluid

KIM DEMARCO

then sprays out. This is, in effect, Auschwitz, and somehow—probably unconsciously—the director, H. C. Potter, the set designers, and the writers who adapted Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson's Broadway hit picked up on it. This crazy quilt of formal audacity, featuring such manic performers as Martha Raye, Hugh Herbert, and Mischa Auer, some of the most astoundingly athletic swing dancers ever filmed, and Olsen and Johnson themselves wandering through the films-within-films with a script in hand, goes where no serious film could at the time.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; April 7.)

THE HOST

Something is hiding in the River Han, in the middle of Seoul. As a result of industrial pollution, a small tadpole has grown not into a respectable frog but into a bad-tempered tadpole the size of a bus. Soon it starts leaving the water, snatching ordinary Koreans from the banks and carrying them off to its fetid home in the sewers. When a young girl is taken, her father, the hitherto hopeless Gang-du (Song Kang-ho), enlists the aid of his family and sets off to save her. Bong Joon-ho's monster movie is often funny and occasionally disgusting, but rarely does it strike you as ridiculous. By the end (which is only just happy), you feel threatened and drained, as you should after a grownup fairy tale, and there are moments of surprising grace—as when an apparition of the girl sneaks into the midst of a communal meal. On the other hand, don't go looking for mercy from the beast; this thing would treat King Kong as a typical bleeding-heart mammal. In Korean.—*Anthony Lane* (3/12/07) (In wide release.)

I THINK I LOVE MY WIFE

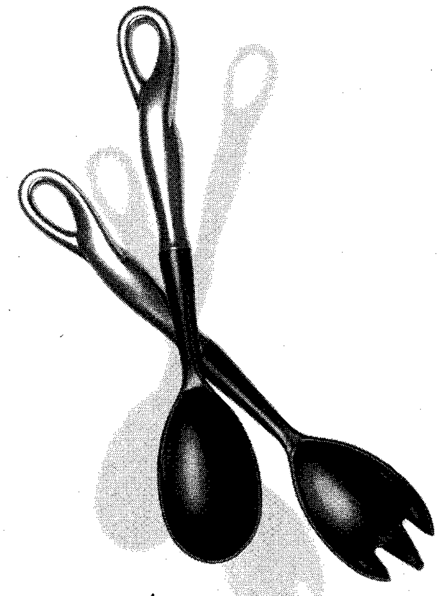
A missed opportunity. For his second directorial effort, Chris Rock (working with a co-writer, Louis C.K.) closely adapted Eric Rohmer's 1972 "Chloe in the Afternoon," about a happily married businessman with a wandering eye whose fantasy life is put to the test by an intense platonic relationship with a temptress who reappears from his past. Rock, who also stars, can't decide whether to aim for realism or for comedy, and the result is neither credible nor funny. Filming on location in New York, Rock places his character, Richard Cooper, in an investment bank in a midtown tower where they ought to review their security arrangements: sleek, sexy Nikki Tru (Kerry Washington) keeps turning up in his office uninvited and unannounced. As a director, Rock doesn't reimagine Rohmer's story but merely borrows it; as an actor, he keeps slipping back into an overeager yelping that recalls his small-screen persona. The best thing in the film is the comic riffing on a serious subject, the social identity of America's black middle class, but it is too diluted by sketch comedy to take hold.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

THE LIVES OF OTHERS

This first feature from the young German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck starts in 1984, in East Berlin. A successful playwright (Sebastian Koch) and his girlfriend (Martina Gedeck), hitherto trusted by the state, are placed under Stasi surveillance. Their investigator, a lonely ascetic by the name of Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), is told to entrap them, instead of which, little by little, he lets them off the hook. Given the movie's cross-weave of envy, terror, paranoia, and endangered principle, Donnersmarck might have been expected to tie himself in knots; yet the outcome, after two and a half hours, remains taut and clear, and by the end you feel exhausted and oddly uplifted. What was the last new movie that put you through so much yet convinced you that the ordeal was worthwhile? With Ulrich Tukur as Wiesler's cheerfully vicious boss. In German.—*A.L.* (2/12/07) (In wide release.)

THE LOOKOUT

The young actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who looks a little like Keanu Reeves, only smarter, is Chris Pratt, a Midwestern high-school jock and rich kid who hurt his head in a car accident (it was his fault) and now suffers from short-term-memory loss. Chris, estranged from his family and his former self, works as a night janitor in a bank and falls into the clutches of a vicious high-school acquaintance (Matthew Goode) who has always envied him and now wants to use him to knock over the bank. This small-scale



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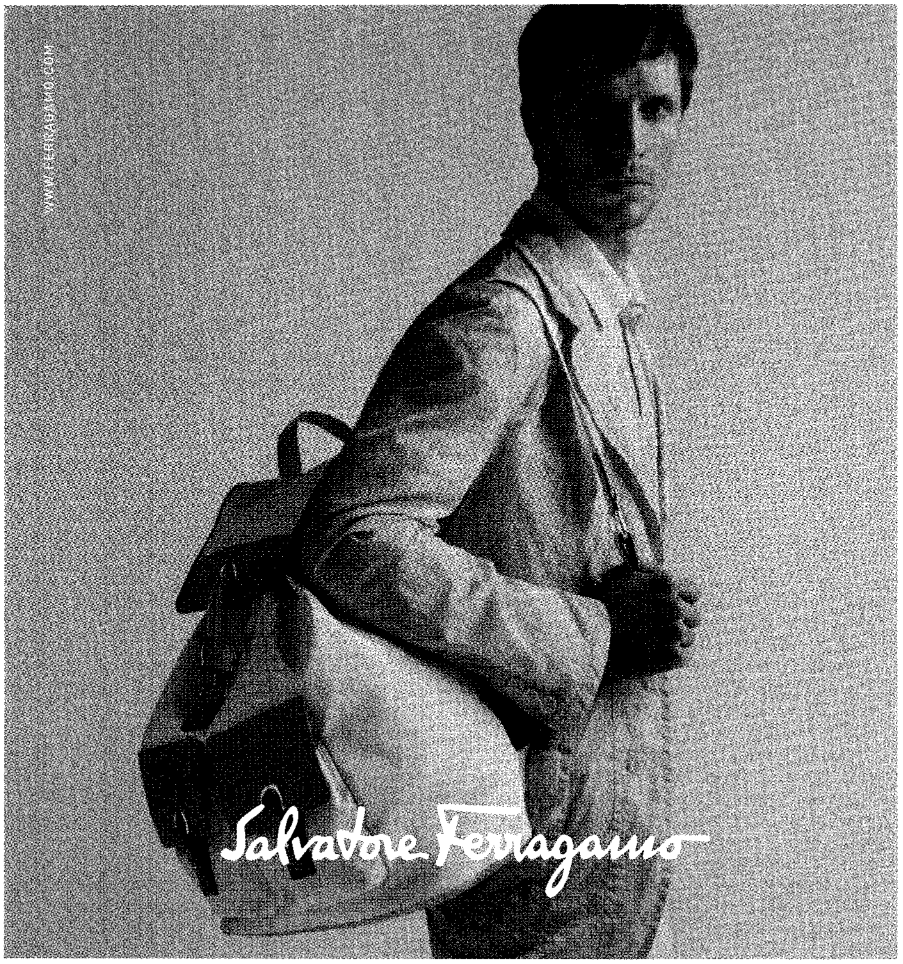


thriller, the directorial début of the screenwriter Scott Frank ("Minority Report"), depends on character and atmosphere and suspense—the violence is minimal. The hero isn't stupid by any means; his problem, as he tries to extricate himself from the bank robbery, is how to turn his handicap into an advantage. Frank displays a convincing sense of evil—and of goodness, too (Chris's roommate, who looks after him, is a smart, ornery blind man, played by Jeff Daniels). Shot in Winnipeg, Canada.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

MURIEL

The theatrical artifice of Alain Resnais's 1963 drama is part of the subject—France's public and private efforts to conceal the physical and moral damage of the Second World War and the Algerian War (which had just ended). The glacially smooth Delphine Seyrig plays Hélène, a middle-aged furniture dealer in Boulogne-sur-Mer, who summons an old flame, Alphonse (Jean-Pierre Kérien), to visit after decades apart. Bringing back war stories and bad memories of fifteen years in Algeria, he clashes with her stepson, Bernard (Jean-Baptiste Thiérrée), who has recently returned from his military service there. Having witnessed torture practiced by the French Army, Bernard collects evidence on film and audiotape to prove widespread, ongoing complicity in the coverup, in which his friend and neighbor Robert (Philippe Laudenbach) is implicated. Jean Cayrol's elaborately fragmented script builds a paranoid web of surprise reappearances and awkward encounters, but Resnais makes the clunky modern reconstruction of the devastated city as much a part of the action as the characters, evoking an ambience as blank and bleak as their oblivious chitchat. In effect, he cinematically attributes two French generations' worth of neurotic, self-destructive behavior to the collective repression of history. In French.—*R.B.* (MOMA; April 6-9.)

THE NAMESAKE

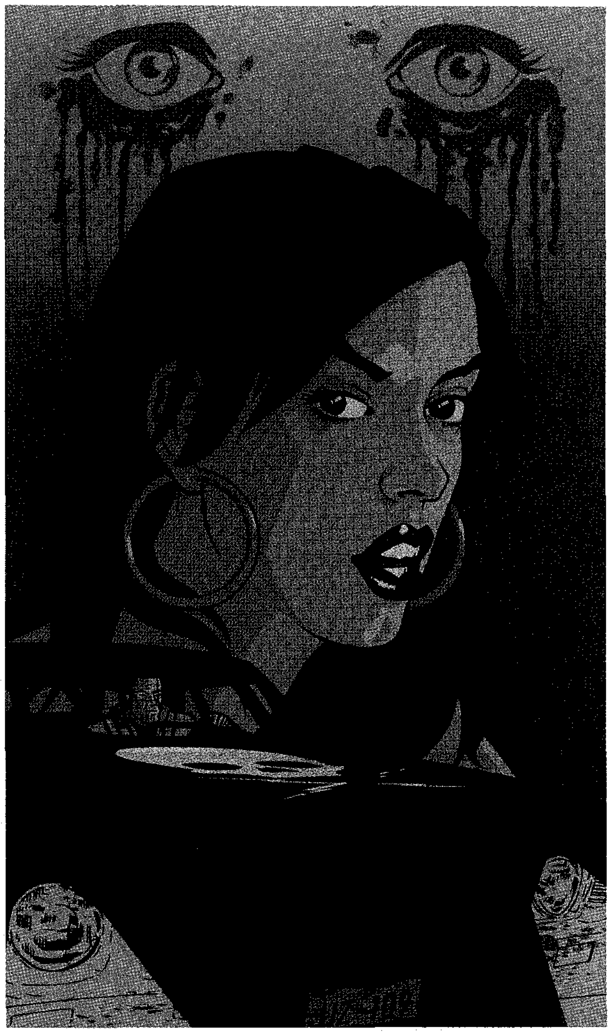
A word is worth a thousand pictures. Jhumpa Lahiri's prose carries the weight of experience, color, and texture, but Mira Nair's adaptation of Lahiri's 2003 novel (Sooni Taraporevala wrote the screenplay), while perfectly pleasant, is a little bland. After Ashima (Tabu), a beautiful young woman from Calcutta, marries the gentle university researcher Ashoke Ganguli (Irfan Khan) and relocates to Nyack, New York, she stands silently in her suburban kitchen; the magic of Lahiri's depiction of the strangeness of a new culture is mostly gone. The filmmakers also have an insoluble problem on their hands: the story jumps ahead abruptly in time, so each scene is meant to epitomize a phase of the couple's life in America. But since Ashima and Ashoke are both reserved, each word of dialogue is burdened with more significance than it can possibly bear. Things lighten up a lot in the next generation, when the couple's son, Gogol (Kal Penn), eagerly assimilates to American ways. Zuleikha Robinson is very lively as a young Bengali woman who has spent some time in Paris and carries on like a character in a scandalous French novel. In Bengali, Hindi, and English.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

PREMONITION

The miserable tale of Linda Hanson (Sandra Bullock), who foresees the death of her husband, Jim (Julian McMahon), only to wake up and find him alive and kicking, or at any rate showering, the next day. This causes her some consternation, and much of Mennan Yapo's movie consists of the heroine looking bothered and bewildered; the high point, and a candidate for the annals of kitsch, comes as she sketches out a day-by-day calendar of weird events and scribbles the climactic entry, "JIM DIES." The film is an unhelpful choice for Bullock, who seems determined to off-load the comic deftness that powered her early career; why pick a script (by Bill Kelly) that is guaranteed to make her seem unlikable? Could she not have borrowed her character's unusual talent and predicted the nonsense that would ensue? With Amber Valletta as a seductress, Kate Nelligan as Linda's mother, and Peter Stormare as the kind of shrink who puts you off going into therapy forever.—*A.L.* (3/26/07) (In wide release.)

REIGN OVER ME

Not, as you might think, a quickie sequel to "The Queen" but the story of Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler), a dentist who lost his wife and three daughters in the horror of 9/11. He is reduced to a murmuring wreck, roaming New York on a scooter, until he has a chance encounter with an old dental-school roommate of his named Alan Johnson (Don Cheadle). Alan has troubles of his own, though they seem paltry by comparison: a frozen marriage, plus a patient (Saffron Burrows) who keeps offering her sexual services. *He* should worry. Slowly, and not without mishap, the two men rediscover their friendship. The result could well have turned cheap and maudlin, but the writer and director, Mike Binder, grasps the stubbornness of grief; Charlie may be hauled back from the verge of suicide, but he will never be cured. Even viewers allergic to Sandler may concede that his air of mumbling drift is right for the role, and Cheadle never misses a beat. With Liv Tyler, Donald Sutherland, and a chunky soundtrack: the title echoes a song from "Quadrophenia."—*A.L.* (3/26/07) (In wide release.)



Rose McGowan stars in "Grindhouse," opening April 6.

BRIAN EWING

SHOOTER

A virtual textbook of action clichés: an incomparable marksman, stealthy, silent, inexorable, hiding among snowcapped peaks; the muzzle of a high-powered rifle aimed directly at the camera; helicopters swirling over mountains and city streets, chasing the hero from the sky; gun-metal colors everywhere and the *chuggah-chuggah-chuggah* of pounding drums and electronic music, a sound both primal and advanced at the same time. Betrayed twice by his country, Mark Wahlberg's Bob Lee Swagger, an ex-Marine, takes vengeance on the swine who tried to do him in—a rogue unit in the government, operating under the control of a powerful, oil-mad senator from Montana (a Dick Cheney-like figure, played by Ned Beatty). The government may be rotten, but American honor is saved by the lone killer. The director, Antoine Fuqua, is trying to appeal both to liberals and to the paleo-conservatives who hate big government and big corporations alike. The loony clash of political currents suggests the degree of confusion roiling Hollywood at the moment. With Danny Glover, Michael Peña, and Kate Mara. Jonathan Lemkin adapted Stephen Hunter's glumly macho thriller.—*D.D.* (4/2/07) (In wide release.)

300

Perhaps the nuttiest movie ever to become a monster hit, this porno-military curiosity features muscle-queen Spartans who fight in leather codpieces and red capes and die clutching each other's hands, and a Persian king, Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro), who is an epicene, nearly naked seven-footer with a shaved head, piercings, and what looks like a gold-lamé thong. Xerxes lounges on cushions in his court, surrounded by intertwined naked lesbians who writhe like snakes in a basket. It's too solemn and violent to be camp. The director, Zack Snyder, poses the Spartan heroes against the horizon or along the crests of mountains under roiling skies. The softening hues of blue and yellow have been filtered or drained out of the palette; the dominant color is the molten brown-gold of bronze shields. It has something to do with the battle of Thermopylae. The actors, including Gerard Butler and Lena Headey, are nonentities. From a graphic novel by Frank Miller.—*D.D.* (4/2/07) (In wide release.)

THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY

The 1920-22 Irish revolt against the English, reimagined by the social realist Ken Loach as an awkwardly violent and sombre old poem made without the usual Irish flourishes of wildness or lyricism. The British military cars, tin lizzies carrying men in the open, are almost comically antique and vulnerable; the I.R.A. rebels, who wear awkward long coats and caps as they scramble across a hill, look less like a guerrilla force than like fellows who had planned to go shopping with their families but somehow got sidetracked into a bizarre adventure. Loach is trying for his own kind of scrappy truthfulness, in which pent-up physical violence bursts forth clumsily, avoiding the typically stylized glamour of classic movie mayhem. Here, violence has the look of surprise. With Cillian Murphy as a refined young rebel who wants complete separation from Great Britain and a socialist revolution in Ireland, and Padraic Delaney as his rough-hewn brother, who is willing to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Shot in County Cork by the cinematographer Barry Ackroyd.—*D.D.* (3/19/07) (In wide release.)

ZODIAC

The great film critic Manny Farber once praised "termite art," the kind of small, stubborn movie that chews its way through a narrow piece of turf. David Fincher's "Zodiac" is mollusk art: the movie keeps elaborating itself out of its own discharge, hardening its emotions, anxieties, and energies into a shell of obsession. Fincher, working with a fantastically detailed script by the young James Vanderbilt, chronicles the case of the self-identified Zodiac killer, a taunting, publicity-mad creep who murdered at least five people in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late sixties and sent confessional notes about the crimes (sometimes in cipher) to newspapers. At the San Francisco *Chronicle*, a young cartoonist, Robert Graysmith (Jake Gyllenhaal), becomes obsessed with the case and stays obsessed, outlasting the police, other reporters, and the killer himself. Moving swiftly but with precise attention to the emotional coloring of such things as weather and light and dour institutional spaces, Fincher runs through interrogations, trips to the library, and the sorting and matching of mounds of evidence. It's a superbly made but (by its very nature) inconclusive film, in which the obsession itself, rather than any payoff, is the point. With Robert Downey, Jr., as an alcoholic ace reporter, Anthony Edwards and Mark Ruffalo as two hardworking cops, and Chloë Sevigny as Graysmith's exasperated wife. Based on Graysmith's books about the case.—*D.D.* (3/19/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

GHOST RIDER: In wide release. **THE HILLS HAVE EYES 2:** In wide release. **THE PAGE TURNER:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **PRIDE:** In wide release. **SUMMER IN BERLIN:** Sunshine Cinema. **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES:** In wide release. **WILD HOGS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Videos by Ira Schneider. April 4 at 8: Program 1, including "Excerpts of a Concert in 1968" (2007). ♦ April 5 at 8: Program 2, including "A Media Primer" (1970). ♦ "On the Collective for Living Cinema." April 6 at 8: Program 1, including "The Doctor's Dream" (1978, Ken Jacobs). ♦ April 7 at 7:30: Program 2, "Hellzapoppin'" (†) and "His Wife's Lover" (1931, Sidney M. Goldin; in Yiddish). ♦ April 8 at 6: Program 3, including "Exchanges" (1979, Bette Gordon). ♦ April 8 at 8: Program 4, including "From Romance to Ritual" (1985, Peggy Ahwesh). ♦ April 9 at 7:30: "Audio Vérité Presents."

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Best of 2006." April 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Belle Toujours" (2006, Manoel de Oliveira; in French) and "Les Signes" (2006, Eugène Green; in French). ♦ April 5 at 7: "Time" (2006, Kim Ki-duk; in Korean). ♦ April 6-8 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15 and April 9-10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Daratt" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through April 19: "B Musicals." April 4 at 1:10, 4:15, and 7:20: "Melody Cruise" (1933, Mark Sandrich). ♦ April 4 at 2:40, 5:45, and 9:50: "Moonlight and Pretzels" (1933, Karl Freund). ♦ April 5 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "Earl Carroll Sketchbook" (1946, Albert S. Rogell). ♦ April 5 at 2:45, 6:16, and 9:45: "Hit Parade of 1943" (1943, Rogell). ♦ April 6 at 1, 4:20, and 7:45: "Bloodhounds of Broadway" (1952, Harmon Jones). ♦ April 6 at 2:45, 6:10, and 9:30: "Slightly French" (1949, Douglas Sirk). ♦ April 7 at 1, 4:20, and 7:40: "Everything I Have Is Yours" (1952, Robert Z. Leonard). ♦ April 7 at 2:50, 6:10, and 9:30: "The Affairs of Dobie Gillis" (1953, Don Weis). ♦ April 8 at 1, 5:40, and 10:10: "Give Out, Sisters" (1942, Edward F. Cline). ♦ April 8 at 2:20 and 7: "Argentine Nights" (1940, Rogell). ♦ April 8 at 4 and 8:30: "Buck Privates" (1941, Arthur Lubin). ♦ April 9 at 1 and 6: "Sis Hopkins" (1941, Joseph Santley). ♦ April 9 at 2:55 and 8: "Joan of Ozark" (1942, Santley). The 8 P.M. screening will be introduced by Diana Canova. ♦ April 9 at 4:30 and 9:45: "Hit the Hay" (1945, Del Lord).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through April 24: The films of Jacques Tati. April 10 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Playtime" (1967; in French, English, and German). The 7:30 screening will be introduced by Macha Makeïeff.

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Special event. April 4 at 7:30: "An Evening with Bill Plympton," short films introduced by the animator. ♦ "Fares to Remember: Taxi 07." April 6-8 at noon: "Taxi!" (1932, Roy del Ruth). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." April 6-7: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. April 10 at 7:30: "Crazy Love" (2007, Dan Klores), introduced by the director.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving," films from the museum's collections. April 4 at 5:30: "Louisiana Story" (1948, Robert Flaherty). ♦ April 5 at 5:15: "The Night of the Shooting Stars" (1982, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani; in Italian). ♦ April 6 at 8:30, April 7 at 7:30, and April 8 at 2: "The Long Day Closes" (1993, Terence Davies). ♦ Through April 22: Films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Except where noted, all films are in German. April 4 and April 8 at 6: "Lili Marleen" (1970). ♦ April 4 at 8:30: "In a Year of 13 Moons" (1978). ♦ April 5 at 6: "Katzelmacher" (1969). ♦ April 5 at 8 and April 7 at 2: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1973). ♦ April 6 at 6: "Fear of Fear" (1975). ♦ April 6 at 8: "Despair" (1977; in English). ♦ April 7 at 4: "The Merchant of Four Seasons" (1971). ♦ April 7 at 7:30: "Jail Bait" (1972). ♦ April 8 at 2: "Whity" (1970). ♦ April 8 at 4: "Recruits in Ingolstadt" (1970). ♦ April 9 at 6: Two films about the making and restoration of Fassbinder's "Berlin Alexanderplatz" (2007, Juliane Lorenz; in English). ♦ April 10 at 7: "Berlin Alexanderplatz," parts 1-3 (1980). ♦ Special screenings. April 4-5 at 7:30 and April 7 at 2: "Binka: To Tell a Story About Silence" (2006, Elka Nikolova; in Bulgarian) and "We Were Young" (1961, Binka Zhelyazkova; in Bulgarian). The April 4-5 screenings will be introduced by Nikolova. ♦ April 6 and April 9 at 6, April 7 at 5, and April 8 at 4: "Muriel" (†).

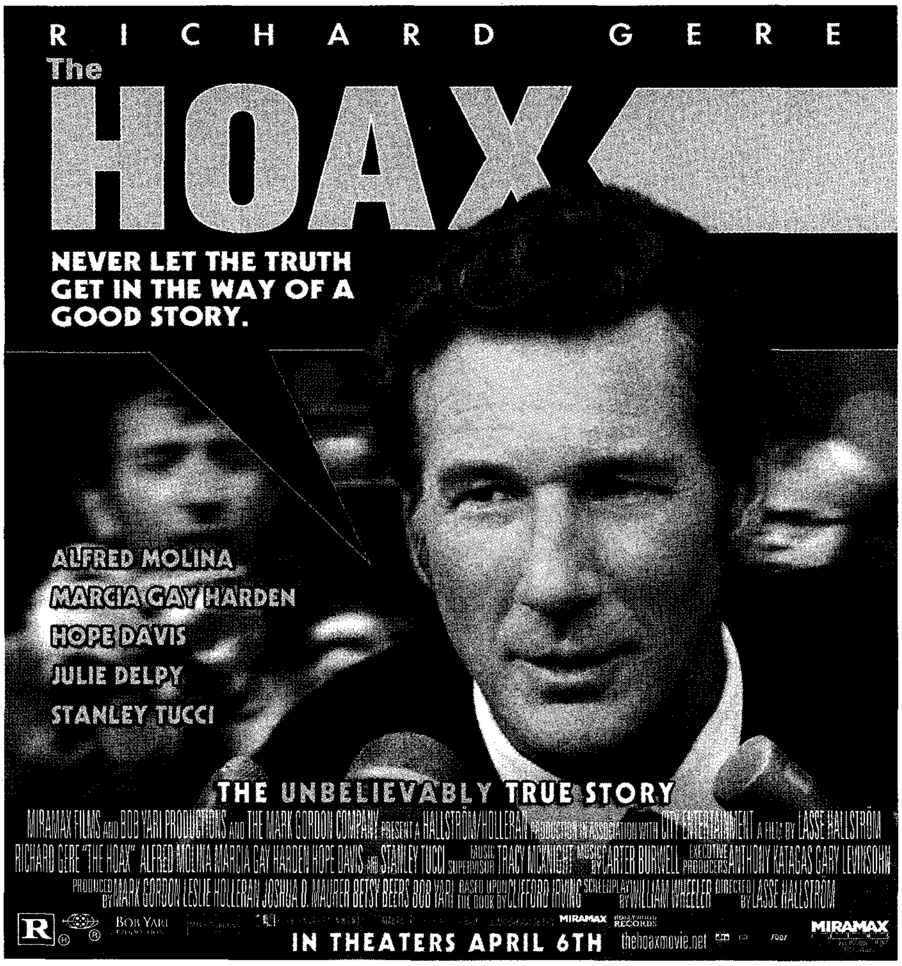
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"The Real Edie Sedgwick." Except where noted, all films are directed by Andy Warhol. April 7 at 2: "Kitchen" (1965). ♦ April 7 at 4: "Afternoon" (1965). ♦ April 7 at 6:30: "Beauty #2" (1965). ♦ April 8 at 4:30: "Horse" (1965). ♦ April 8 at 6:30: "Ciao! Manhattan" (1972, John Palmer and David Weisman) and a fragment from "Lulu" (1967, Richard Leacock).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." April 6 at 9:30: "Teorema" (1968, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian), introduced by Marina Abramovic.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." April 6-7: "Enter the Dragon" (1973, Robert Clouse).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. April 8 at 1:30 and 6 and April 10 at 1: "The Italian" (2005, Andrei Kravchuk; in Russian). ♦ April 8 at 3:45 and 8 and April 10 at 2:45: "Rear Window" (1954, Alfred Hitchcock).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through April 12: The New York African Film Festival. April 4 and April 7 at 1: "Rostov-Luanda" (1997, Abderrahmane Sissako; in Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, and French). ♦ April 4 at 2:50 and April 8 at 1:30: "The Colonial Misunderstanding" (2004, Jean-Marie Teno; in English, French, and German). ♦ April 4 at 6:30 and April 5 at 3: "Kongi's Harvest" (1970, Ossie Davis) and a filmed interview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with the director. ♦ April 4 at 9 and April 10 at 1: Films from Ghana, including "Testament" (1988, John Akomfrah). ♦ April 5 at 7:15: "Clouds Over Conakry" (2007, Cheick Fantamady Camara; in Malinke and French). ♦ April 5 at 10: "The Narrow Path" (2005, Tunde Kelani). ♦ April 6 at 1 and April 9 at 8:30: "Teranga Blues" (2007, Moussa Sene Absa; in Wolof and French). ♦ April 6 at 3: "Death of Two Sons" (2006, Micah Schaffer; in Pulaar, English, and French). ♦ April 6 at 5:30 and April 9 at 2: Short films by Fanta Régina Nacro; in Mòoré and Dioula). ♦ April 6 at 7:45: "The Night of Truth" (2004, Nacro; in Dioula, French, and Mòoré). ♦ April 6 at 10: "Paris Selon Moussa" (2003, Cheik Doukouré; in French). ♦ April 7 at 5:30: "Max and Mona" (2004, Teddy Mattera; in Tswana, Zulu, English, and Afrikaans). ♦ April 7 at 7:45: "Africa Unite," a work in progress by Stephanie Black. ♦ April 8 at 3:30 and April 10 at 3:10: "The Forgotten Man" (2004, Osvalde Lewat-Hallade; in French) and short films. ♦ April 8 at 6:15: "Movement (R)evolution Africa" (2007, Joan Frosch and Alla Kovgan; in English, French, Wolof, Portuguese, Japanese, Shona, and Lingala). ♦ Special event. April 9 at 7: "A Gala Tribute to Diane Keaton." ♦ "Film Comment Selects." April 10 at 6: "Electra Glide in Blue" (1973, James William Guercio). ♦ April 10 at 8:30: "Hot Fuzz" (2007, Edgar Wright).

READINGS AND TALKS

PUBLIC ART FUND TALKS

The artist Alex Katz, whose 1977 multistory installation in Times Square featuring the images of glamorous women was an early project of the fund, talks about his career. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-980-3942. April 4 at 6:30.)

SHAKESPEARE MARATHON

Debra Messing, Rainn Wilson, James Naughton, Philip Bosco, and many other actors celebrate the Bard's four-hundred-and-forty-third birthday with a reading from his plays, poetry, and speeches. A preview of Kenneth Branagh's forthcoming film "As You Like It," starring Kevin Kline, Bryce Dallas Howard, and Alfred Molina, will also be screened. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. No tickets necessary. April 9, from 6:30 to 10.)

K.G.B. BAR

The poets Eileen Myles and Anselm Berrigan read from their work. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. April 9 at 7:30.)

"LIVE FROM THE NYPL"

In Leslie Bennett's new book, "The Feminine Mistake," the veteran journalist argues that the price mothers pay for staying at home full time is too high for anyone's good. On April 10 at 7, she debates the point with the novelist Elissa Schappell. (South Court Auditorium, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444.)

THREE LIVES & COMPANY

Robert Goolrick offers selections from his memoir, "The End of the World As We Know It." (154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary. April 10 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"CARL SANDBURG AND HIS MODERNISM"

The poet, novelist, and Abraham Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg is considered by many to be an heir to Walt Whitman. A onetime hobo, he travelled the country collecting and performing folk songs and in 1927 published two hundred and eighty of them in "The American Songbag." Last fall, the Library of America brought out "Carl Sandburg: Selected Poems," edited by Paul Berman. On April 4 at 6, Berman hosts a reading and discussion of Sandburg's work with the poets Edward Hirsch, Harvey Shapiro, Geoffrey O'Brien, and Meghan O'Rourke and the historian Sean Wilentz. The eighty-four-year-old composer Lukas Foss is scheduled to perform, on the piano, a portion of his cantata for chorus and orchestra based on Sandburg's poem "The Prairie," which he wrote in 1943, when he was twenty-one. He'll be joined by the Greenwich Village Singers. (Hemmerdinger Hall, N.Y.U., 100 Washington Sq. E. For more information, call 212-998-2100.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Things take a decidedly domestic turn this week, with both the big houses offering sales of furnishings and decorations to grace every nook of the well-appointed home. At **Sotheby's** "Celebration of the English Country House" (April 4-5), an impressive George III mahogany bookcase shares the stage with more whimsical pieces, such as a seventeenth-century mirror framed in silk, with needlework depicting exotic birds and Oriental pavilions, and a nineteenth-century workbox—for holding a sewing kit—made out of ivory and built in the shape of a house. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** two-day House Sale (April 4-5) of mid-range objects for the home includes everything from paintings and marble fireplaces to a pair of ten-foot-tall bronze gates that are sure to impress the Joneses. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

The Black Rock Coalition Orchestra pays tribute to James Brown.

JOOST SWARTE

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
THE FILMOSOPHER

April 14-27

Along with a weeklong run of "The Pervert's Guide to Cinema," Sophie Fiennes's documentary about the Slovenian thinker Slavoj Žižek, MOMA will show five films that Žižek discusses, including "Duck Soup," "Wild at Heart," and "The Birds." (212-708-9480.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CHORAL CAPITAL

April 18, April 26

The Metropolitan Museum will host two vividly contrasting choral concerts this month: a rendition of the Mass in B Minor by the Netherlands Bach Society (at Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium) and the world première of "And on Earth, Peace," a Mass written by five composers for the male chorus Chanticleer (at the Temple of Dendur). (212-570-3949.)

ART
COLOR THEORIES

April 27-Aug. 6

The Guggenheim's "Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy" is a gentle twist on a formula (Impressionist paintings, big names) that usually draws enthusiastic crowds to museums. Some forty works by French and Italian painters (including Seurat, Signac, and Pelizza da Volpedo) reveal how artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries considered color and visual perception in the wake of Impressionism. (212-423-3500.)

NIGHT LIFE
GET ON UP

May 3

The Black Rock Coalition Orchestra, a group of some of the city's hardest-working musicians, assembles at Joe's Pub to pay tribute to the late James Brown, on what would have been the great soul man's seventy-fourth birthday. (212-967-7555.)

THE THEATRE
TENNIS PROS

May 6

Angela Lansbury stars in her first Broadway show in twenty-five years, "Deuce," a new work by the playwright Terrence McNally in which Lansbury and Marian Seldes portray former tennis doubles champions who are reunited decades later. (212-239-6200.)

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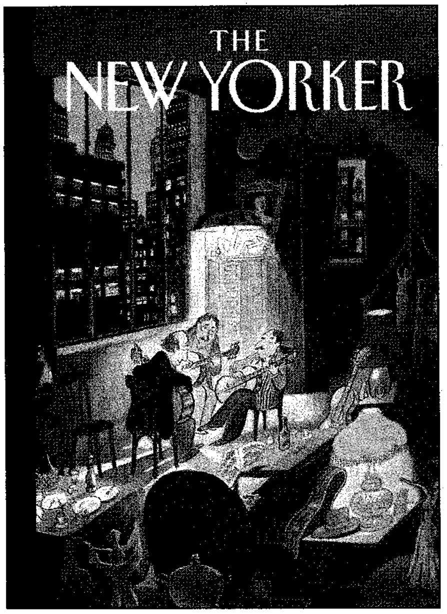
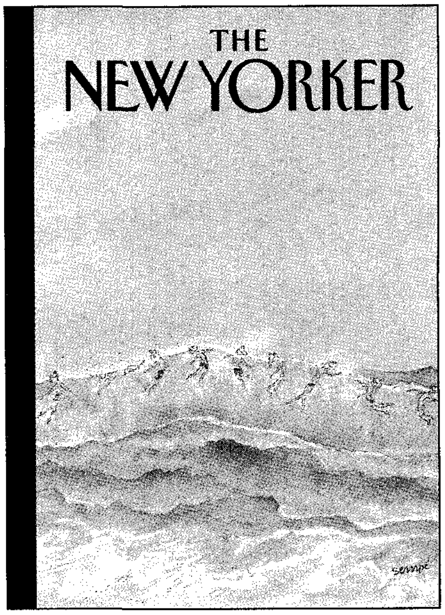


"Three Amigos"



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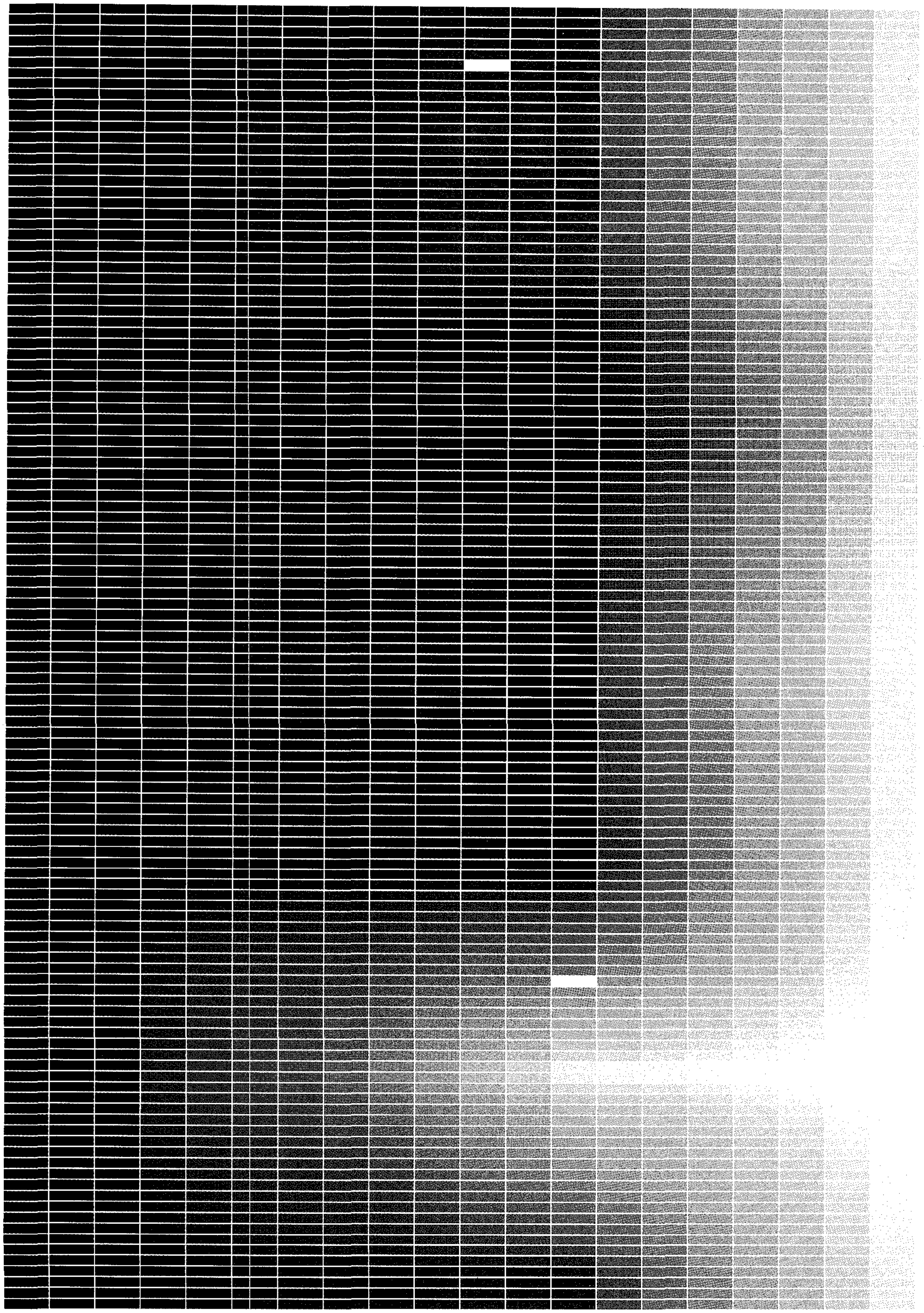

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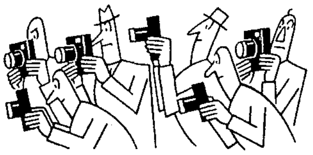
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

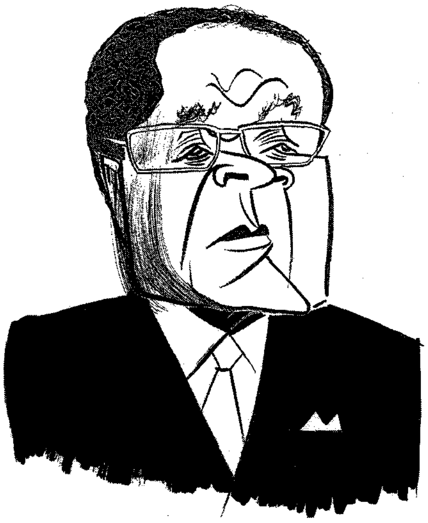
COMMENT
HANGING ON



One Sunday afternoon last month, members of Zimbabwe's opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, were gathering—for a prayer meeting, they said—when President Robert Mugabe's security forces descended on them, firing tear gas, water cannons, and bullets. One person was killed, and at least fifty others were injured after being taken into custody. When the M.D.C. leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade-union activist, arrived at the police station, Mugabe's men repeatedly bashed his head against a wall, then detained him, too. Mugabe has always been rough with the M.D.C., a party formed eight years ago to challenge his dictatorial powers, and Tsvangirai has been arrested and knocked around many times before, but this time he was badly disfigured and his skull severely lacerated. These are actions that most dictators would cover up, but several days later Mugabe held a public rally to commend the police for their use of force, and to warn Tsvangirai and his followers that they could expect more violence. True to his word, Mugabe unleashed his goons on a nationwide rampage that resulted in hundreds of his opponents and critics being dragged from their homes and offices and beaten.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The shamelessness of Mugabe's brutality—and his gloating pride in it—aroused the attention of the international press and diplomatic corps. But the story of Zimbabwe's violent misrule and national degradation is not a new one. Mugabe, who is eighty-three, came to power in 1980 as a leader of the long and bloody liberation struggle against the white-supremacist regime of Ian Smith's Rhodesia, and he has always used his hero's mantle as cover for terrorizing his opponents, real and perceived. He has murdered thousands of his people and deprived the rest of meaningful freedom. In the process, he has transformed one of Africa's most prosperous and promising countries into one of the poorest and weakest on earth.

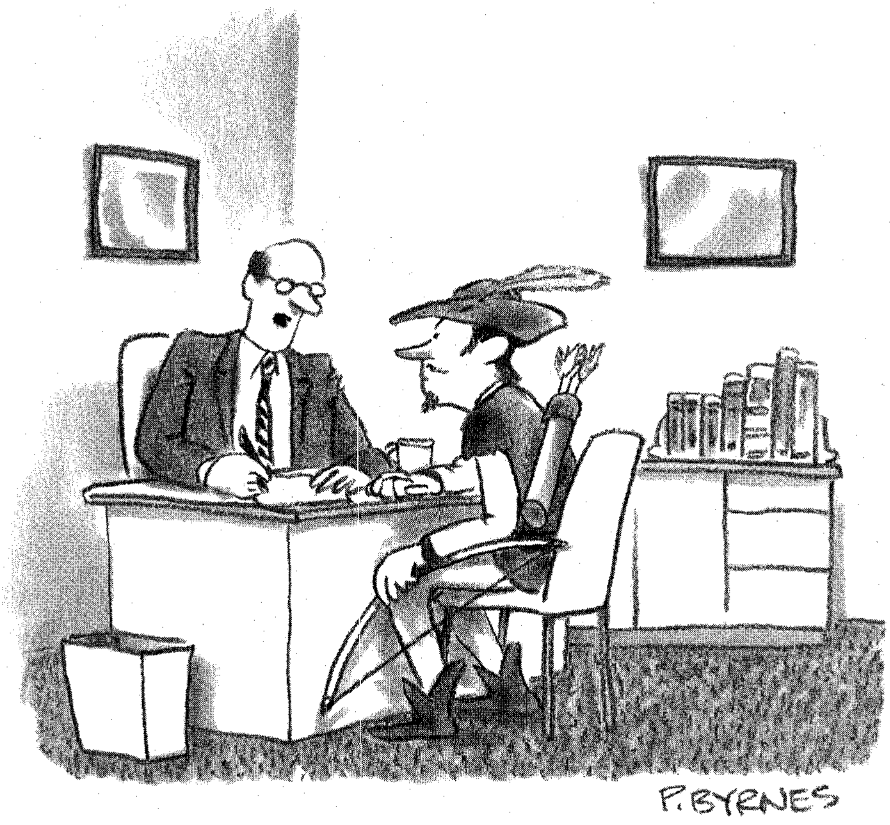


Zimbabwe's inflation rate is already more than seventeen hundred per cent, the highest in the world, and the International Monetary Fund warns that it could exceed five thousand per cent by year's end. Unemployment is around eighty per cent, and the average income is less than a dollar a day. With chronic food shortages and no medical system left to speak of, life expectancy has plunged from sixty years, in 1990, to less than thirty-seven years (the shortest anywhere), while the infant-mortality rate has increased by more than fifty per cent. Not surprisingly, as many as three million Zimbabweans—a quarter of the population—have fled the country. Yet last week Mugabe's information minister, Sikhanyiso Ndlovu, declared, "There is no crisis whatsoever in Zimbabwe."

Mugabe has sworn that he will not relinquish power before his hundredth birthday. He is obsessed with the fiction that he is Zimbabwe's legitimate leader, and his assault on his nation—an attempt to control his people by squeezing the life out of them—has steadily intensified since the emergence of the M.D.C. He seems to be punishing Zimbabweans just for considering that he could be replaced. But Mugabe, who is as clever as he is crude and perverse, blames his opponents for the unrest. According to his rhetoric, they are terrorists and agents of white imperialism, and whatever hardship the country may be enduring is the price of its ongoing fight for freedom. "The opposition is always calling for change, change, change," Mugabe said at his mid-March rally. "I am not pink. I don't want a pink nose. I can't change. I don't want to be European. I want to be African." Tsvangirai, at the funeral for his murdered colleague, said of Mugabe, "I think he needs psychiatric help."

Since 2002, Mugabe has faced censure and sanctions from the United States and Europe, but he treats these rebukes as badges of honor. (One consequence of America's diminished authority since the invasion of Iraq has been that bullies around the world feel emboldened to scorn the West; Mugabe likes to tell his critics to "go hang.") He has also been able to take comfort in the fact that African leaders have supported him, even as he insults them by insisting that his thuggery and his many failings are the expression of his African authenticity. South Africa, the regional power, has for years touted a policy of "quiet diplomacy" toward Zimbabwe—a euphemism for silently indulging Mugabe's crimes and giving him a stamp of legitimacy when he has stolen elections. Why South Africa should provide this service is a matter of speculation. No doubt, President Thabo Mbeki and, to a degree, his predecessor, Nelson Mandela, don't want to dishonor a fellow liberation leader. Yet they have dishonored themselves by failing to stand up to an oppressor who is as contemptuous of his people as Ian Smith was.

Still, last week, when Mugabe was summoned to account for Zimbabwe's plight at a meeting of the region's heads of state in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, it was widely reported that he had exhausted his neighbors' indulgence. Given the gratuitousness and the extremity of Mugabe's latest fits of violence, coupled with the fact that thousands of refugees were braving the crocodile-infested Limpopo River to enter South Africa illegally, the prevailing story in the press and among diplomats was that the dictator was finally approaching his endgame. Even if that were true, there is no obvious way to prepare a democratic succession of power. The resilience of the M.D.C. is impressive, but it is a weak party, inexperienced and internally divided, and the only alternatives are rival factions within Mugabe's Zanu-PF Party, which are controlled by his old enforcers—former leaders of the Army and the security forces—who have grown immensely rich in the course of the country's impoverishment.



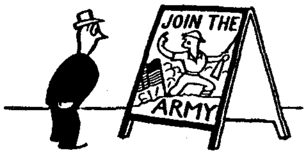
"You have to declare what you rob from the rich, but you can deduct what you give to the poor."

Mugabe, meanwhile, remains defiant. He has begun campaigning for another term as President, and as he left for Dar es Salaam his police surrounded M.D.C. headquarters and again detained Tsvangirai and other members of the Party's leadership. Mugabe said that he was looking forward to the solidarity of his fellow African leaders, and he flew home boasting, "We got full backing." They did ask him about Tsvangirai, and Mugabe reported, "I told them he was beaten but he asked for it." The meeting concluded with the leaders appointing Thabo Mbeki to encourage dialogue between Mugabe's government and the opposition, and issuing a call for Western governments to lift their sanctions, while demanding nothing in exchange. "He will continue to tell the West to go hang," Mugabe's spokesman explained, but it was obvious that it was Zimbabwe that was being left to the gallows.

—*Philip Gourevitch*

ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

RISK MANAGEMENT



In the wake of a rise in substantiated instances of misconduct by its recruiters, the United States military, it was reported last month, is considering installing surveillance cameras in its recruiting stations. The military may also want to assess the tactics that its employees use in the virtual realm. This admissions season, an Army recruiter has been e-mailing recent college graduates with the offer of hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarship money to pay for medical school, in exchange for four years of service. Nothing new there. What's surprising is his assertion to students that they would be better off in Baghdad than in Georgetown.

Susan Kahane, who is twenty-two, graduated from Columbia last spring. When she took the MCAT, in August, she checked a box to signal that she wished to receive information about outside sources of financial aid. Soon, she was inundated with e-mails from the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force ("FREE MEDICAL SCHOOL!!!"). One, sent on January 31st by Captain Christopher D. Mayhugh, of the Army Medical Service Corps, stood out. "Upon finishing your residency," the message read, "you will be assigned to one of a variety of locations including Germany, Italy and Hawaii and your obligation will be complete." (The Medical Service Corps's Web page, in contrast, notes prominently that its officers have participated in combat operations in Korea, Kosovo, Somalia, Panama, and Iraq.)

Mayhugh's omission of Iraq, Kahane recalled last week, "seemed a little bit strange." Still, she said, "These e-mails were often slightly tempting to me, because of my worries about paying for medical school."

On March 14th, Kahane received another e-mail from Mayhugh, with the subject "Medical school scholarships still available." This time, rather than invoking European and tropical destinations, Mayhugh addressed the prospect of being posted to a less than desirable locale. "What if you get sent to Iraq?" he wrote in the letter's final paragraph. He continued:

> Well, consider this: there has been an average of 160,000 troops in the Iraq theater of operations during the last 22 months, and a total of 2112 deaths, that gives a firearm death rate of 60 per 100,000. The rate in Washington, D.C. is 80.6 per 100,000. That means that you are about 25% more likely to be shot and killed in our Nation's Capitol, which has some of the strictest gun control laws in the nation, than you are in Iraq.

Kahane recalled, "After reading it once, I felt strongly that something was wrong, but I didn't know what." She looked up the figures and did the math herself, and found that all the statistics in the e-mail were either outdated or incorrect, and that, even if they had been correct, Mayhugh seemed to be comparing a yearly figure for Washington with a monthly one for Iraq. (Going by Mayhugh's numbers, there would be nearly fifteen gun murders in Washington every day. In reality, there were about three murders, of any kind, per week in 2006. In the same period, an average of sixteen American troops died each week in Iraq.) Kimberly Thompson, an associate professor of risk analysis and decision science at Harvard's School of Public Health, agreed, last week, to evaluate Mayhugh's claim and found the discrepancy even starker. In her estimate, the risk of being killed in Iraq is ten times higher than the risk of being killed in Washington, D.C. "The recruiter's e-mail message is really amazingly misleading," she said.

It turns out, as Kahane learned with a subsequent Google search, that "D.C. is more dangerous than Iraq" is a well-worn canard. Representative Steve King, a Republican from Iowa, promulgated a variation, involving his wife's safety, last year on the floor of the House, while Mayhugh's paragraph was plucked, verbatim, from an e-mail that circulated in 2005. The realization that Mayhugh's message derived—one could see, with nominal research—from a Web fallacy was dispiriting to Kahane. She had written a letter to Mayhugh, but didn't send it. "I thought, I guess he knows the math isn't right, so what's the point of telling him?" she said.

Reached last week at his office in Maryland, Mayhugh stood by the e-mail, saying, "Most people's perception of Iraq is that 'Oh, my God, people are being murdered over there by the thousands.' I think if you look at any type of situation where you have several hundred thousand people on the ground and now you throw in the fact that what they're doing is dangerous and they have very big heavy vehicles and firearms with live ammunition, the number of people being killed over there is pretty small."

He acknowledged that the paragraph had come from a forwarded e-mail, but said that, before pasting it into his pitch, he had done "some simple calculations" that supported its conclusions. "In what I've seen in dealing with the war and the misperceptions of it," he said, "it seemed to me like those would be the right numbers." He went on, "I work in D.C. on a daily basis, and I'm afraid to get out of my car in a lot of places. I hear about police officers being murdered every day in D.C. and Baltimore. And I've had thousands of friends and colleagues go to Iraq and come back safely."

—*Lauren Collins*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
MANCHESTER UNITED

Being England's second city, like being Prince Charles's second wife or Posh Spice's second innovatively named child, means always being in the shadow of the one who got there first. In Manchester, however, an enterprise is under way to assert the city's primacy: the first Manchester International Festival, a two-week symposium of new art and music which will take place this summer. At a party held last week in the Gramercy Park Hotel's Rose Bar to announce the festival, its director, Alex Poots, was eager to make Manchester's case. "Manchester is a city of firsts," Poots, who bears a glancing resemblance to Rowan Atkinson, said. "The first industrial society was born there. Manchester has the oldest public library in Britain." Poots, who was born in Edinburgh, promised to check with his staff on which Mancunian had built the world's first computer.

"My instinct when I was asked to do this was, Don't bother unless you are going to do something really different, so I asked people to present all new work," Poots said. The commissions will include an opera based on the Chinese legend of the Monkey King, composed by Damon Albarn, of Blur, and complete with acrobats and martial artists; an orchestral adaptation of Salman Rushdie's novel "The Ground Beneath Her Feet"; and a performance by Lou Reed of "Berlin"—not exactly a new work, since the album was originally released in 1973, but one with the advantage of having been listened to in the three intervening decades by only the most dedicated fans.

To promote the gravitas of a city best known for one of its soccer squads, for the Madchester pop-music scene of yore, and for its tendency to be drenched in slow, steady rain, Poots had imported a team of seasoned professionals. "Manchester is the first city of the modern age," Nick Johnson, the chairman of a company called Marketing Manchester, said. "It's where Marx met Engels; it's where Rolls met Royce. The industrial revolution started in Manchester. Manchester was the first city to invent the computer. I'll have to get back to you on who that was, exactly." (Arguably, the first computer was built in Philadelphia, though the first electronic stored-program computer can definitively be said to be a Mancunian invention. Marx made Engels's acquaintance in Paris; however, the two did frequently convene in the North of England.)

Johnson, who comes from Manchester, said that Manchester's music scene—the city spawned the Smiths, Joy Division, and New Order—had been an inspiration when he was a student, twenty-odd years ago. "The Hacienda was a very significant thing for me," he said, referring to the night club depicted in the movie "24 Hour Party People"; he admitted, however, that he hadn't actually gone there very often. "For me it was far more important symbolically. There were people who went three times a week, and they have got no brain left now." Another Mancunian to have survived that era unaddled was Peter Saville, the graphic designer and a founding partner of Factory Records, who was recently asked to coin a phrase that would capture Manchester's essence. "It's 'Manchester.' Full stop. 'Original.' Full stop. 'Modern.' Full stop," Johnson said. "What it's encouraging everyone in the city to do is to ask the question: Is what I am doing original and modern?"

Sir Richard Leese, the leader of Manchester's city council, jumped in. "It's not a slogan—it's a brand signifier."

It was Sir Richard's enthusiasm, Alex Poots said, that had persuaded him to come to Manchester, even though he had, only recently, been hired as the director of contemporary arts at the English National Opera, in London. "I went up there for a chat, and as I got off the train they called and offered me the job," he said. Poots called Manchester "a very real city," but admitted that he still spends half the week in Britain's first city. "London is probably the cultural capital of the world," he said. "And I can't sell my flat in London, because I can't get off the property ladder. It's gone up thirty-five per cent in value in three years."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS
THE CASTLE

Not long ago, Roland Woods got an urgent call on his cell phone ("Yo, Ro!") from one of the residents of 630 Riverside Drive, where he works as a kind of super. The caller, who had recently been in prison, had paid a surprise Valentine's Day visit to his girlfriend's apartment, equipped with a bouquet of roses, and found her entertaining another suitor. He was standing outside her door, enraged and beginning to panic. "Welcome back to the real world," Woods told him. "Now put down the flowers and come back home, and we'll talk."

Home, for the Valentine's caller and about sixty other men (plus the occasional woman), is the Fortune Academy, or, as it's familiarly known, the Castle, a five-story Gothic fortress on the corner of Riverside and 140th Street, which serves as dormlike living quarters for parolees and ex-cons. Woods, a former convict himself, is a residential supervisor there. Every Thursday evening, the Castle dwellers assemble in a conference room on the ground floor and discuss the difficulties of adjusting to life on the outside. Their odds aren't good—two out of three former convicts are arrested again within three years of their release—and so they keep talking their problems through.

At a recent meeting, a tightly wound forty-eight-year-old named John introduced himself. He'd arrived at the Castle the previous week, fresh from what he called a "small bid"—ninety days on Rikers Island—that had proved to be more destabilizing than either of his bigger bids (four and seven years, respectively). "I went to Social Security to get a card," he said. "They told me to go to Medicaid. Well, Medicaid says you need a Social Security card. Then I go to Vital Records to get a birth certificate—they won't give it to me because I don't have an I.D." He went on, "One plus one is two, two plus two is four, four plus four is eight," continuing the sequence until he reached five hundred and twelve. "They don't realize, when they release people, you have to have *one*."

Across the table, another man shook his head and said, "I got the same story."

A man wearing a skullcap, clam diggers, and a long, Merlin-like beard spoke up. His name was Yaseen. "They gave me an I.D. with an alias," he said, "but a birth certificate with my real name. So here I am with this big beard . . ."

As the meeting progressed, a theme emerged: bad choices do not necessarily make bad people, and parole affords little room for error. (As John put it, "Years ago, you had to be a criminal to go to jail. Now all you have to be is a fuckup.") Fraternizing with other parolees in public, for instance, is not allowed. "But it's inhuman not to," a broad-shouldered man named Michael said. "If I see you, I'll speak—and people are going to be going back to prison." In 2004, of the ten thousand recidivists in New York State, eight thousand were charged with violating parole rather than committing new crimes.

JoAnne Page, the C.E.O. of the Fortune Society, which runs the Castle, was serving as the moderator. She tried steering the conversation toward "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen Covey.

"Excuse me?" a man replied from the corner. "Seven habits?" Earlier, he had said, "I don't like following rules. The law's the law and it's not made for us."

Not everyone was downcast. Mustafa, the house chef and a former resident, stopped in, wearing a Bluetooth device in his ear. "One morning in August of 1977, I made a poor choice, and it took me until now to get out of it," he said. "I just got off parole with a violent felony."

"How many years?" Yaseen asked.

"I did twenty-five."

"Good for you."

"But one of my goals was to vote," Mustafa continued. "I'm going tomorrow to the post office to register. I'm fifty-one, I have a seven-month-old son, my own apartment, and another child on the way. The way I see it, I'm actually, like, twenty-six."

They all laughed. "It's the new math!" the man in the corner said. Applause followed Mustafa to the door. "We need to tell you who to vote for," someone called out.

"Hillary!" Mustafa shouted, raising his fist.

—*Ben McGrath*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

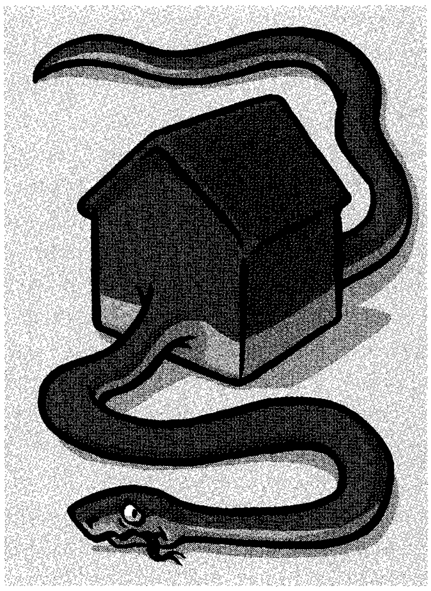
SUBPRIME HOMESICK BLUES

Not long ago, New Century Financial—a mortgage lender specializing in loans to the subprime, or high-credit-risk, market—dubbed itself "a new shade of blue chip." Today, with its stock price down more than ninety per cent in the past six months and the company close to bankruptcy, it looks more like a new shade of Enron. And it is not alone. In the past year, more than two dozen subprime lenders have shut their doors. The percentage of their borrowers who are delinquent (meaning that they've missed at least one payment) has doubled, and predictions of more than a million foreclosures have become commonplace. As concerns grow that the subprime crisis could spread to the rest of the housing market, pundits and politicians looking for a culprit have seized on New Century and its ilk, charging them with causing the crisis with their "predatory lending" practices, duping tens of millions of homeowners into borrowing more money than was good for them.

The backlash against the subprime lenders is understandable, since their business practices were often reckless and deceptive. Instead of responding to the slowdown in the housing market by cutting back their lending, they pressed their bets—last year, six hundred billion dollars' worth of subprime loans were issued. Many of the lenders hid their troubles from investors, even as their executives were dumping stock; between August and February, for instance, New Century insiders sold more than twenty-five million dollars' worth of shares. And there's plenty of evidence that some lenders relied on what the Federal Reserve has called "fraud" and "abuse" to push loans on unwitting borrowers.

For all that, "predatory lending" is a woefully inadequate explanation of the subprime turmoil. If subprime lending consisted only of lenders exploiting borrowers, after all, it would be hard to understand why so many lenders are going bankrupt. (Subprime lenders appear to have been predators in the sense that Wile E. Coyote was.) Focussing on lenders' greed misses a fundamental part of the subprime dynamic: the overambition and overconfidence of borrowers.

The boom in subprime lending made huge amounts of credit available to people who previously had a very hard time getting any credit at all. Borrowers were not passive recipients of this money—instead, many of them used the lax lending standards to make calculated, if ill-advised, gambles. In 2006, for instance, the percentage of borrowers who failed to make the first monthly payment on their mortgages tripled, while in the past two years the percentage of people who missed a payment in their first ninety days quadrupled. Most of these people did not suddenly run into financial trouble; they were betting that they would be able to buy the house and quickly sell it. Similarly, last year almost forty per cent of subprime borrowers were able to get "liar loans"—mortgages that borrowers can get simply by stating their income, which the lender does not verify. These loans were ideal for speculative gambles: you could buy far more house than your income justified, and, if you could flip it quickly, you could reap outsized profits. Flat-out fraud also proliferated: consider the mortgage taken out by one "M. Mouse."



While some subprime borrowers were gaming the system, many just fell victim to well-known decision-making flaws. "Consumer myopia" led them to focus too much on things like low teaser rates and initial monthly payments rather than on the total amount of debt they were assuming. Then, there was the common tendency to overvalue present gains at the expense of future costs—which helps explain the popularity of so-called 2/28 loans (which come with a low, fixed-interest rate for the first two years and a much higher, adjustable rate thereafter). People were willing to trade the uncertainty of what might happen in the long run for the benefit of owning a house in the short run.

Another thing that led subprime borrowers astray was their expectation that housing prices were bound to keep going up, and therefore the value of their house would always exceed the size of their debt. This was a mistake, but one that many Americans have made in response to the real appreciation in housing prices over the past decade—how else could one justify spending two and a half million for a two-bedroom apartment in New York? Given the government's subsidizing and promotion of homeownership, it's not surprising that borrowers leaped at the chance to buy a home even on onerous terms. The problem, of course, is that the cost of misplaced optimism is much higher for subprime borrowers.

The result of all this is that many subprime borrowers would have been better off if lenders had been more stringent and not granted them mortgages in the first place; that's why there have been countless calls for the government to ban or heavily regulate "exotic" subprime loans like the 2/28s. But what's often missed in the current uproar is that while a substantial minority of subprime borrowers are struggling, almost ninety per cent are making their monthly payments and living in the houses they bought. And even if delinquencies rise when the higher rates of the 2/28s kick in, on the whole the subprime boom appears to have created more winners than losers. (The rise in homeownership rates since the mid-nineties is due in part to subprime credit.) We do need more regulatory vigilance, but banning subprime loans will protect the interests of some at the expense of limiting credit for subprime borrowers in general. And while the absence of a ban means that some borrowers will keep making bad bets, that may be better than their never having had the chance to make any bet at all.

—*James Surowiecki*

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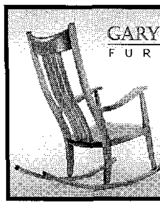

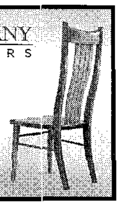

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MEDICAL DISPATCH

WHAT'S NORMAL?

The difficulty of diagnosing bipolar disorder in children.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

In April, 2000, Steven Hyman, a psychiatrist who at the time was the director of the National Institute of Mental Health, convened a meeting of nineteen prominent psychiatrists and psychologists in order to discuss bipolar disorder in children. The disorder has long been recognized as a serious psychiatric illness in adults, characterized by recurring episodes of mania and depression. (It is sometimes called manic depression.) People with bipolar disorder are often unable to hold down jobs; require lifelong treatment with powerful medications, many of which have severe side effects; and have high suicide rates. The disorder is thought to afflict between one and four per cent of Americans and tends to run in families, although no genes for it have been identified. At the time of the meeting, few children had been given a diagnosis of the illness, and it was considered to begin, typically, in adolescence or early adulthood.

In the late nineteen-nineties, however, there was an increase in awareness of bipolar disorder in children, first in medical journals and then in places like BPParents, a Listserv founded by the mother of an eight-year-old boy who had been diagnosed with the disorder. Hyman himself had been consulted by parents of children who, he told me, were "really suffering and extremely disruptive, having violent outbursts at school and at home, and hard to contain under any circumstances." Many of the parents told Hyman that they believed their child had bipolar disorder, and they cited a book called "The Bipolar Child: The Definitive and Reassuring Guide to Childhood's Most Misunderstood Disorder." The book, which was written by Demitri Papolos, a psychiatrist affiliated with the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in New York City, and his wife, Janice, the author of several how-to manuals, had been published in 1999. (It has sold more than 200,000 copies, and a third edition came out last summer.) "The first parents who visited me came with the Papolos book in hand," Hyman said.

The Papoloses argued that bipolar disorder was often overlooked in children. In 1998, according to "The Bipolar Child," nearly four million children were given Ritalin or other stimulants for hyperactivity; of that number, the Papoloses contended, more than a million would eventually receive a bipolar diagnosis. They also cited researchers' estimates that anywhere from a third to half of the 3.4 million children thought to suffer from depression were actually experiencing the early onset of bipolar disorder. The book detailed the negative effects of bipolar disorder on patients (disruptive behavior, drug abuse, suicide attempts) but also prominently featured what might be described as its paradoxical benefits:

> This illness is as old as humankind, and has probably been conserved in the human genome because it confers great energy and originality of thought. People who have had it have literally changed the course of human history: Manic-depression has afflicted (and probably fueled the brilliance of) people like Isaac Newton, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, Johann Goethe, Honoré de Balzac, George Frederic Handel, Ludwig von Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Leo Tolstoy, Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, Robert Lowell, and Anne Sexton.

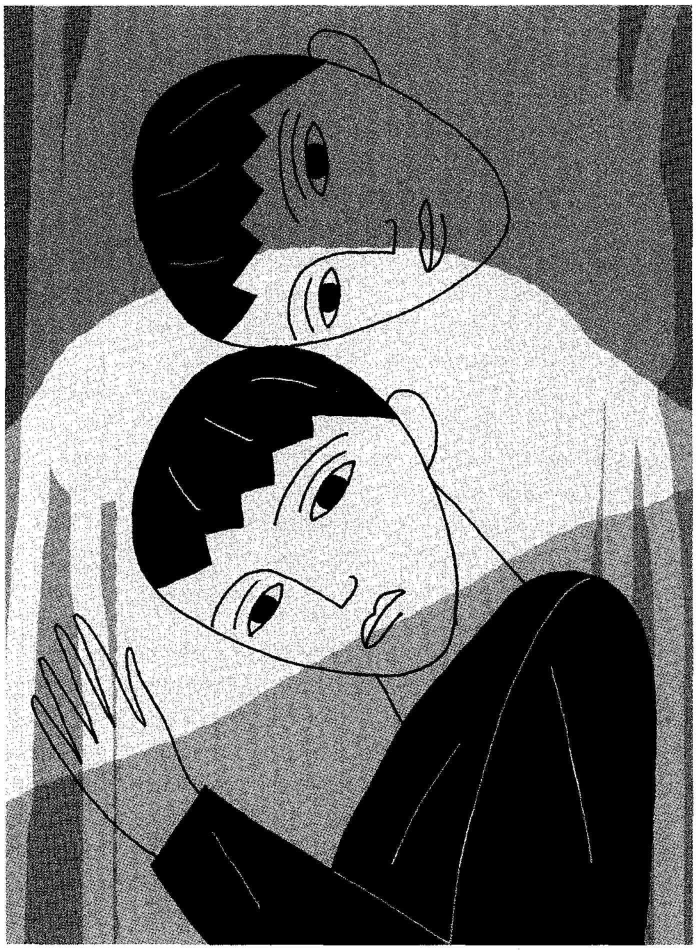
(These claims are similar to those made about other serious psychiatric disorders, particularly depression.)

The Papoloses' research was based on responses to questionnaires that they distributed through BPParents, whose several hundred members are parents who suspect that their children have the disorder. "These children seem to burst into life and are on a different time schedule from the rest of the world right from the beginning," the Papoloses wrote. "Many are extremely precocious and bright—doing everything early and with gusto. They seem like magical children, their creativity can be astounding, and the parents speak about them with real respect, and sometimes even awe." The book included some parents' observations:

> She was always ahead of her time. She started talking at eight months with the words "kitty cat." She walked at nine months and was speaking in complete sentences by a year. She was writing small novels in the second grade. She acted and danced and sang way beyond her years.

> At eighteen months he climbed out of the baby bed in the middle of the night, opened the fridge, got out three dozen eggs (it was Easter time), and proceeded to sit in his booster chair and crack three dozen eggs onto our hardwood floors. (He wanted to bake a real cake—he didn't like the toy mixing bowl I had given him to play with.) After the insurance company quit laughing they did pay to refinish our floors.

During the meeting at the N.I.M.H., the psychiatrists and psychologists argued about whether bipolar disorder existed in children, and, if it did, how it could be distinguished from other syndromes affecting mood and behavior, such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (A.D.H.D.) and autism. One psychiatrist, Barbara Geller, a professor at Washington University, in St. Louis, had published articles about children whose moods often fluctuated rapidly. In the course of a single day, the children were extremely sad, even suicidal, and then, suddenly, they became elated and "grandiose"—a term that psychiatrists use to mean an inflated sense of one's abilities. Geller believed that some of these children who matched several specific and narrow criteria had bipolar disorder. Joseph Biederman, a child psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, who also attended the meeting, had treated children suffering from extreme symptoms of irritability and aggressive behavior and, often with a colleague, Janet Wozniak, had published several articles in medical journals asserting that these children met the criteria for bipolar disorder described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (D.S.M.-IV)*, the reference book for psychiatric illnesses. Hyman encouraged the group to arrive at a consensus, in part to create a uniform set of criteria that could be used to enroll children in studies of the disorder.



Is it possible to make a bipolar diagnosis before adolescence?

ANTHONY RUSSO

In August, 2001, the results of the meeting were published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, and it was concluded that "bipolar disorder exists and can be diagnosed in prepubertal children," though the article went on to say that not all children who appeared to have the disorder satisfied the *D.S.M.* criteria. The vagueness of the definition offered few guidelines for practical diagnosis.

Meanwhile, articles inspired by the Papoloses' book had begun appearing in newspapers and magazines, promoting the idea that there was a new diagnosis for troubled children. In August, 2002, *Time* published a cover story titled "Young and Bipolar," with the tagline "Once Called Manic Depression, the Disorder Afflicted Adults. Now It's Striking Kids. Why?" The article featured a list of behaviors—adapted from the Papoloses' book—that was intended to help parents "recognize some warning signs" of the disorder. Among those were "poor handwriting," "complains of being bored," "is very intuitive or very creative," "excessively distressed when separated from family," "has difficulty arising in the A.M.," "elated or silly, giddy mood states," "curses viciously in anger," and "intolerant of delays." The magazine also published a sidebar listing prominent writers and musicians who may have suffered from bipolar disorder, including Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, and Kurt Cobain. Although the article cited external factors such as stress and drug use, it also noted that the disorder is "hugely familial," as one doctor put it. (One mother, who was afflicted with bipolar disorder, claimed that she knew before her son was born that he would be bipolar, because he was restless even in the womb.)

Not long after the article came out, a research team at Massachusetts General Hospital, led by Biederman and Wozniak, began an eight-week comparative study of the antipsychotic drugs olanzipine (marketed under the name Zyprexa) and risperidone (Risperdal) for thirty-one children between the ages of four and six who had been given a diagnosis of bipolar disorder based on *D.S.M.* criteria. During the trial, the children gained an average of six pounds and experienced sharp increases in prolactin, a pituitary hormone, which, when elevated, might interfere with sexual development. But their symptoms of severe irritability and aggression were markedly muted by the treatment, and the researchers, while noting the adverse effects, concluded that the drugs could be beneficial to bipolar children.

There are few reliable statistics on the incidence of pediatric bipolar disorder, but according to a national study of community-hospital discharge records, led by Brady Case, a research assistant professor of psychiatry at New York University and a child-psychiatry fellow at Bradley Hospital, in Providence, the percentage of mentally ill children under eighteen who have been given a diagnosis of the disorder increased more than fourfold between 1990 and 2000. Many doctors fear that the media, in drawing attention to bipolar disorder, may have exaggerated its prevalence in children and presented a misleading picture of the disorder. The situation has some similarities to the overdiagnosis of attention-deficit disorder in the first half of the nineteen-nineties, during which the prescription of stimulants such as Ritalin tripled for children between the ages of two and four, according to a study published in February, 2000, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Some children do, of course, suffer from bipolar disorder, but it is important to recognize that the consequences of its treatment can be dire, particularly when parents are unaware of or ignore the dangerous side effects of the medications. In December, 2006, a four-year-old girl in Massachusetts, who had received a bipolar diagnosis at the age of two and a half, died from an apparent overdose of Clonidine, a blood-pressure medicine used to sedate hyperactive children. She was also taking Seroquel, an antipsychotic, and Depakote, an anti-seizure medication that helps regulate mood. (Her parents have been charged with murder and have pleaded not guilty.)

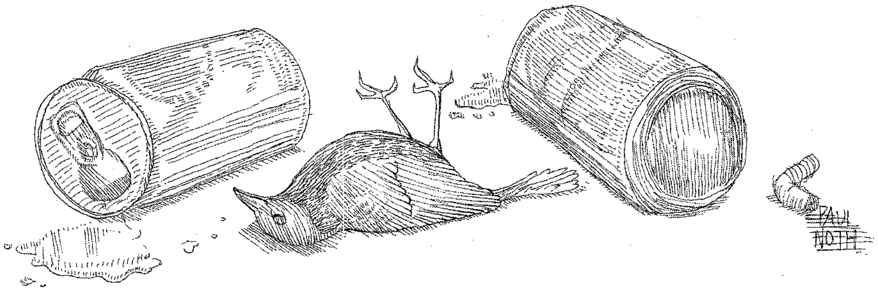
"The diagnosis has spread too broadly, so that powerful drugs are prescribed too widely," Hyman told me. "We are going to have hell to pay in terms of side effects."

One of the earliest accounts of bipolar disorder comes from Aretaeus the Cappadocian, a Greek physician who was believed to have practiced in Alexandria and Rome in the second century A.D. He wrote of the afflicted, "They are prone to change their mind readily; to become base, mean-spirited, illiberal, and in a little time, perhaps, simple, extravagant, munificent, not from any virtue of the soul, but from the changeableness of the disease. But if the illness becomes more urgent, hatred, avoidance of the haunts of men, vain lamentations; they complain of life, and desire to die." However, the disorder was not clearly recognized for centuries, and it wasn't until January, 1854, at a meeting of the French Imperial Academy of Medicine, in Paris, that a physician named Jules Baillarger cited a mental illness that involved recurring oscillations between mania and depression. Baillarger described it as *folie à double forme* (dual-form insanity). The following month, another French doctor, Jean-Pierre Falret, described a similar illness to the academy, calling it *folie circulaire* (circular insanity). The term "manic-depressive psychosis" was introduced in 1896 by Emil Kraepelin, a German psychiatrist, who observed that periods of acute mania and depression were usually separated by longer intervals during which the patient was able to function normally.

Doctors made little progress in treating the disorder until after the Second World War, when John Cade, an Australian psychiatrist working at a veterans' hospital, set out to test the hypothesis that mania was related to a toxic buildup of urea in the bloodstream. By chance, he discovered that the lithium urate he injected into guinea pigs had a calming effect. After testing lithium carbonate on himself, he began administering it to his manic patients. It became the first successful drug therapy for a psychiatric disorder. (Lithium remained the only treatment for bipolar disorder for decades, and is still the most prevalent, but in recent years anticonvulsants and some antipsychotics have also proved effective.) In 1980, the term "bipolar disorder" replaced "manic-depressive disorder" as a diagnostic term in the *D.S.M.*, but it was applied only to teen-agers and adults.

"Until about ten years ago, it was considered quackery to talk about bipolar disorder in children," Barbara Geller told me. "The overwhelming number of adult and child psychiatrists believed that this was just a hyperactive child." Geller first encountered a child she believed exhibited the classic symptoms of bipolar disorder in the early nineties, a thirteen-year-old girl from a white middle-class family who was in the juvenile-correction system in the southern United States. The girl was euphoric despite her incarceration. "She seemed elated, grandiose, and infectiously funny, in spite of being in reform school," Geller recalled. Geller wondered whether the girl might be experiencing a manic episode, similar to those seen in adults with bipolar disorder. She began to interview other school-age and young adolescent children, seeking similar cases. One eleven-year-old girl harbored romantic fantasies about her teacher that led her to routinely disrupt class. She was also "delightfully euphoric" in an interview session with Geller, but as the questioning progressed she said that she had a loaded gun hidden at home, and had prepared a suicide note. Her parents searched their home, and found both the gun and the note. Geller was struck by the young girl's simultaneous grandiosity and depression; the two states are hallmarks of adult bipolar disorder, but they are rarely seen in such quick succession.

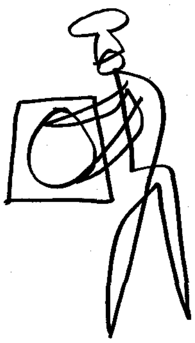
Geller found that the manner in which symptoms appeared in children with bipolar disorder was significantly different from that of most adults who had the illness. The episodes of mania and depression in most adults tend to subside after a few weeks or several months; children's episodes generally last longer, and cycle on a daily basis through a more extreme set of moods. "We have these kids who look so sad it hurts to watch them. And a moment later it looks like they've had a snort of coke," Geller said. "For four hours, they will be high: they are giggling, they are laughing, they are hypersexual, they want to touch the teacher, they want to undress in church, they talk too much, they sleep too little, and they think they are in charge



THE FIRST ROBIN OF SPRING BREAK

of things. Then they switch. In the same day, they can suddenly become suicidal and depressed."

In 1995, with a grant from the N.I.M.H., Geller began a longitudinal study of three groups of children: those she had diagnosed as having bipolar disorder, using more precise categorical criteria than those specified in the *D.S.M.;* those with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder; and a control group of children who had no known behavioral disorders. There were about ninety subjects in each group, and the average age was ten. Based on interviews with their parents and close relatives, Geller and her colleagues found that adult bipolar disorder was relatively common in the family members of the children who suffered from the disorder but not in those who had A.D.H.D., or those in the control group. Geller concluded that there is a strong genetic basis for bipolar disorder in children, and that, among those diagnosed as having the disorder, more than eighty per cent might also have A.D.H.D.



Experts now agree that bipolar disorder can occur in children, but there is disagreement about which symptoms clearly indicate a diagnosis. Geller maintains that inappropriate euphoria and grandiose behavior must accompany symptoms of irritability or depression. Biederman and Wozniak contend that extreme irritability, including aggression, should compel a clinician to consider a diagnosis of pediatric bipolar disorder, in keeping with *D.S.M.* criteria. However, Ellen Leibenluft, who heads the pediatric bipolar-disorder research program at the N.I.M.H., told me that there is no certain way to classify even severe irritability as normal versus aberrant, particularly as children develop. Geller uses the analogy of sore throats: "Strep infection causes sore throat, but only five per cent of all sore throats are due to strep, and ninety-five per cent are due to viruses. Irritability is akin to the symptom of a sore throat: children with bipolar disorder are extremely irritable, but they comprise only a small subset of all irritable children."

Despite these differences, most researchers use the *D.S.M.* criteria as a guideline. Demitri Papolos, however, argues against applying these categorical criteria, saying that their vagueness can cause confusion. "The diagnostic category in and of itself doesn't really capture the condition," he said. He prefers to make a diagnosis based on whether a patient's behavior matches the "core phenotype" he has developed, which includes mania and depression, among several other symptoms. "Once you see what this"—pediatric bipolar disorder—"looks like, you can't mistake it," he told me. "They call it the View. If you have the View, you get it. It's not apocalyptic, it's a very clear picture." Papolos, who is not a child psychiatrist, said that he has had children referred to him from all over the country, as many as two a week in the past seven years. He could not immediately recall any child in this group who did not have a bipolar diagnosis, because, he said, "the people who come to see me have read the book."

The need to establish diagnostic criteria is particularly urgent because many of the drugs given to bipolar children are relatively new and have not been tested extensively, especially in children. Depakote, the most common brand name for valproate, is an anti-seizure medication for adults and children over the age of ten, which is also used to treat acute mania in adults; it can cause obesity and diabetes and has been associated with polycystic ovarian disease. The antipsychotic drug Risperdal can result in involuntary distorted movements, or "tardive dyskinesia." Lithium can cause decreased thyroid function and kidney failure. "Most important, we don't understand their long-term effects on the developing brain," Geller said. Failing to correctly diagnose pediatric bipolar disorder has its own dangers, since treating a bipolar patient with a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor like Paxil or Zoloft, as if he were simply depressed, or with a stimulant like Ritalin, as if he had A.D.H.D., might worsen his symptoms. Like other serious psychiatric illnesses, bipolar disorder is diagnosed largely by observing the patient's behavior. There is no blood test, or other clinical diagnostic tool, for the disorder; although brain scans have been performed on children who have been given the diagnosis, none have shown a definitive pattern.

Some books and articles on bipolar

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disorder in children and adolescents have suggested that a positive response to a drug like Risperdal, which can be effective in adults with manic bipolar disorder, indicates that the child is bipolar. In fact, the drugs typically given to bipolar children are what doctors call "nonspecific," which means that their apparent efficacy is not diagnostic of the syndrome. "All the medicines that work in bipolar cases also work in kids who are just aggressive," Geller said. "Children with mental retardation who acted aggressively were treated with drugs like lithium, and it helped to mute their behavior. But it also made them very thirsty, so they started drinking from toilet bowls and engaging in other kinds of unsuitable behavior. The contention that treatment with these drugs 'makes' the diagnosis is frightening—and completely untrue."

In January, 2007, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry published a paper to guide clinicians in their assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with bipolar disorder. The paper cited a survey of members of the Illinois-based Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation, in which twenty-four per cent of the children from eight hundred and fifty-four families who had been given a diagnosis of bipolar disorder were between the ages of zero and eight. (A more recent survey conducted by the foundation puts the number at fifteen per cent.) "The validity of diagnosing bipolar disorder in preschool children has not been established," the academy's paper noted. "Until the validity of the diagnosis is established in preschoolers, caution should be taken before making the diagnosis in anyone younger than age six. The evidence is not yet sufficient to conclude that most presentations of juvenile mania are continuous with the classic adult disorder." Biederman and Wozniak have given the diagnosis to preschool children and have included them in drug trials. But other experts, Geller and Leibenluft among them, contend that bipolar disorder cannot yet be accurately diagnosed in a child younger than six, because there is currently no consensus on what constitutes aberrant behavior at that age. In addition, they say, symptoms of manic behavior must be elicited through an interview not only with the parents but also with the children themselves; those younger than six may lack the language to describe what they are experiencing.

LINCOLN'S DREAM

It is impossible to state just how in love I am
with my own body, the white snows of me,
the sudden involutions and crevasses of me,
my muscles tensed or slack in anger or fear.

This is why, wherever I go, I am in Lincoln's dream.
A sentry stands by, the stairway is eerily lit,
light is a little milk splash on people's faces,
the faces of my Cabinet, grotesque and funny masks.

Who is dead in the White House? I demand. *Who's not*?
answers a soldier, pointing to a shrouded head
on my own body, encased like a gangly insect
on the catafalque, and the loud sobs wake me up.

Reader, when you caress yourself in the morning,
amazed that you are made the way you are,
sure that yours is the finest body of all,
remember, you are Lincoln having Lincoln's dream.

—*Dan Chiasson*

In the early nineties, in an effort to insure that children were receiving the correct diagnosis, Geller established a second-opinion clinic for bipolar disorder at Washington University. "Following the publication of the Papoloses' book, we began to have a greater influx of people into the clinic," she said. The positive effect of the book, she added, was that "parents realized it was O.K. to take their kids to a child psychiatrist." At the same time, the book could lead to false diagnoses. Geller went on, "In the clinic, the first question we have learned to ask of parents is 'Have you read the Papoloses' book?' And 'What in the book resembles your child?' And we will get answers like 'My child is irritable and he likes sweets.'" Geller's team developed stringent criteria to characterize mania as abnormal elation and grandiosity—such as inappropriate bouts of extreme giddiness, or hyperbolic statements of one's importance or ability—so that irritability alone was not adequate to establish a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Many parents, she said, cling to a bipolar diagnosis when, in fact, the child is suffering from an autistic developmental disorder: "Wouldn't you rather have your child grow up to be Ted Turner," who has bipolar disorder, "than Rain Man?"

April Prewitt, a child psychologist who trained at Harvard and practices in Lexington, Massachusetts, also spends a good deal of time "undiagnosing" children who have been told they are bipolar. In the past three years, Prewitt says, she has seen thirty children and adolescents diagnosed as having bipolar disorder. In her opinion, only two had the malady. "It has become a diagnosis du jour, as A.D.H.D. was five years ago," Prewitt told me. "Not only is the diagnosis being made incorrectly but it's being made in younger and younger children." She said that parents routinely arrive at her office with the Papolos book, and with lists of behaviors like the one featured in *Time*. "Each one of these could be behaviors due to something completely different," she said. "I could score twenty on this list on a bad day."

Prewitt recalled a seven-and-a-half-year-old boy she saw, who lived in an affluent Boston suburb. Max (a pseudonym) had trouble concentrating and was refusing to go to school. His pediatrician had diagnosed bipolar disorder and begun treating him with Risperdal and Seroquel. "It turned out that the diagnosis was 'a divorce situation,'" Prewitt said. Max's par-

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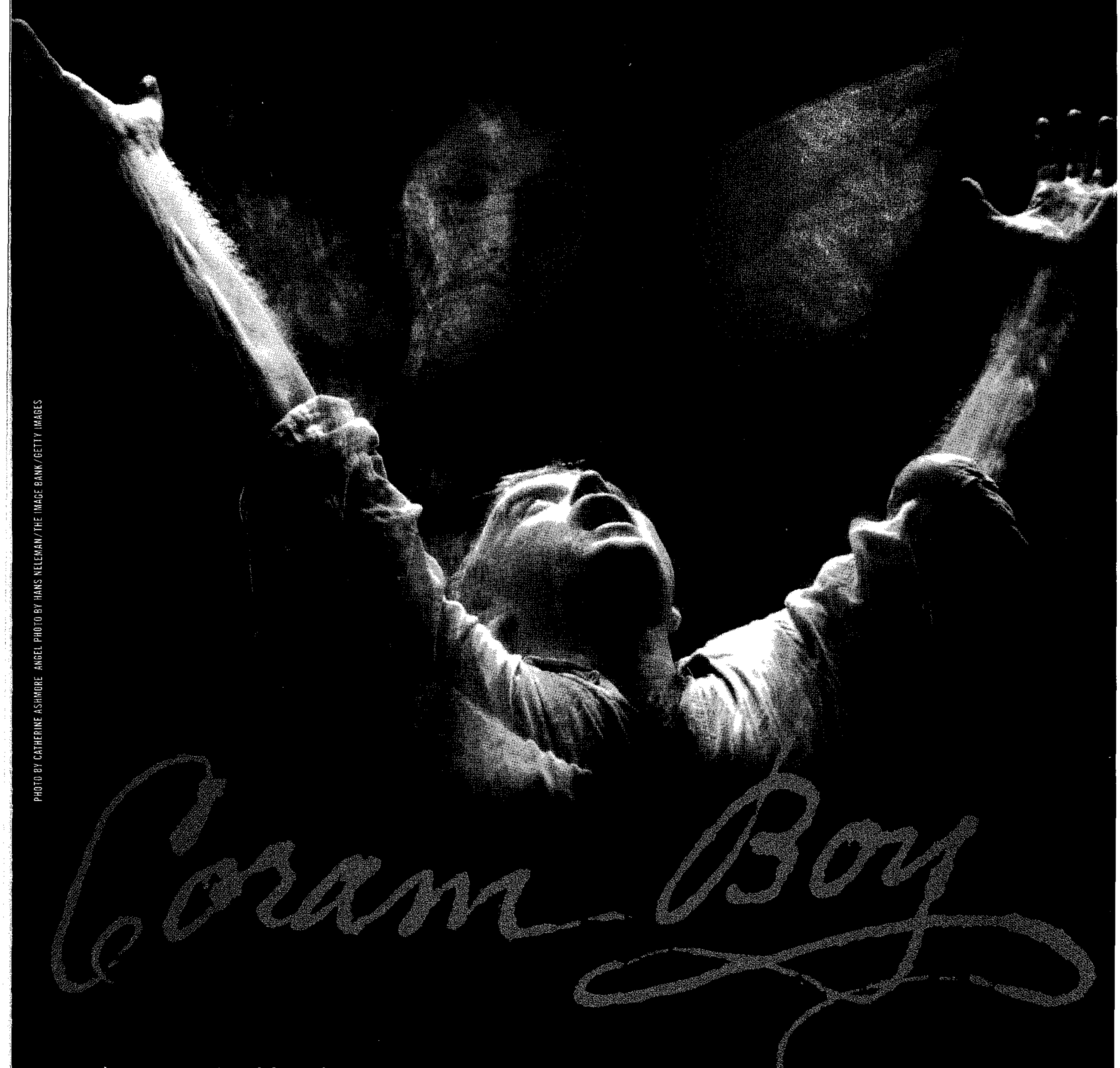

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ents had separated and were undergoing bitter divorce negotiations. "Max had put on twenty pounds because of the medication, while he was being shuttled back and forth, one week with mom and one week with dad." Prewitt believed that the parents' feuding was causing Max to oscillate between being sullen and withdrawn and aggressive and hyperactive. She recommended that Max be evaluated by a neuropsychologist, who found that he had only some minor attention deficits. During the following six months, his parents went into mediation in an effort to settle their divorce more amicably, and Max was weaned off his medications.

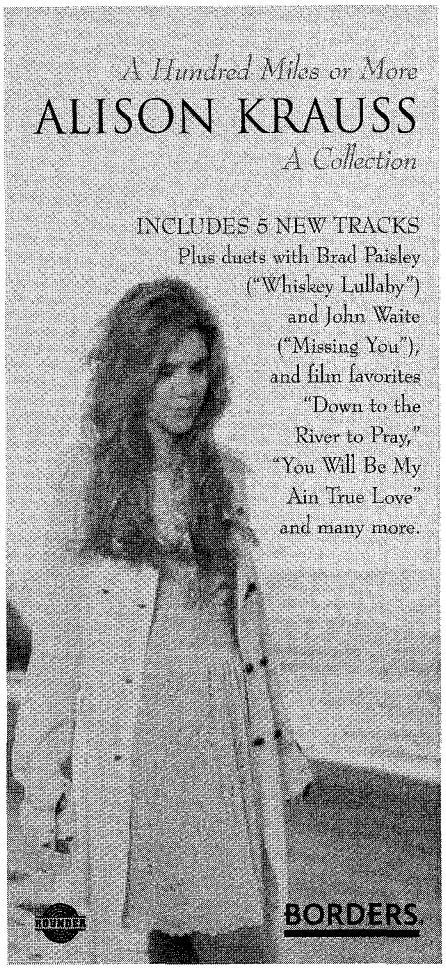
Prewitt maintains that it may not be possible to diagnose bipolar disorder with certainty in a preadolescent child. "After all these years, I am not sure of the diagnosis of bipolar disorder until a child is well into adolescence," she told me. "I've never seen a seven- or eight-year-old that I would be comfortable definitively diagnosing with bipolar disorder. The changes that children undergo, both in the biology of their development and in the need to adapt to changes in environment at home and at school—interactions with parents, siblings, and other children—all can trigger behaviors with rapid and wild swings of mood."

Phillip Blumberg, a psychotherapist in Manhattan, told me, "Psychological diagnosis is, in essence, a story. If you have a mood disorder, there is the fear, the shame, and the confusion—the stigma—associated with it, so you want to grab on to the most concrete and clear story you can. There is something about the clarity of bipolar disease, particularly its biological basis, which is incredibly soothing and seductive."

Blumberg, who for two years was a vice-president at ABC Motion Pictures, believes that advertising by pharmaceutical companies has influenced the public's view of bipolar disorder. (Eli Lilly, in particular, has come under fire for its marketing practices. The drug company is currently the subject of lawsuits that claim that the company attempted to hide Zyprexa's side effects, and promoted the drug for off-label uses. Lilly has denied the accusations.) Blumberg described recent ads, for drugs like Zyprexa, that include a list of symptoms characteristic of the disorder. "But, of course, we all have these symptoms," he said. "Sometimes we're irritable. Sometimes we're excited and elated, and we don't know why. With every form of advertising, the first goal is to make people feel insecure. Usually, they are made to feel insecure about their smell or their looks. Now we are beginning to see this in psychiatric advertising. The advertisements make frenetic, driven parents feel insecure about the behavior of their children."

Blumberg noted that he had seen instances of the disorder in some children, and that it was a real and serious diagnosis. But he also cited the mounting pressure on children, particularly in the middle and upper classes, to succeed, first at private or selective public schools, and then at exclusive colleges and universities. "These kids become very well turned-out products," he said. "They live to have résumés. They don't have résumés because they live." Parents may fear that children who behave in an eccentric way are at a disadvantage, and in turn pressure the pediatrician or the psychiatrist to come up with a diagnosis and offer a treatment. "Then an industry grows up around it. This, then, enters as truth in the popular imagination."

The debate over pediatric bipolar disorder will likely extend to the next edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. "*D.S.M.* always has an out in its definitions, a category called N.O.S.—'not otherwise specified,' " Steven Hyman said. "The problem with describing a kid who is up-and-down and irritable and sullen and wild and then grandiose is that he could indeed be rapidly cycling between mania and depression, but it could be an awful lot of other things, too. Bipolar disorder in children represents the intersection of two great extremes of ignorance: how to best treat bipolar disorder and how to treat children for anything. It's really important that we define the kids with bipolar disorder and treat them, but it's also important that we not begin to diagnose kids with excess exuberance or moodiness as having the disease. We have to realize that we are risking treating children who could turn into obese diabetics with involuntary movements. There is something very real about the kids with devastating and disruptive symptoms, but the question is still the boundaries. You can do more harm than good if you treat the wrong kid." ♦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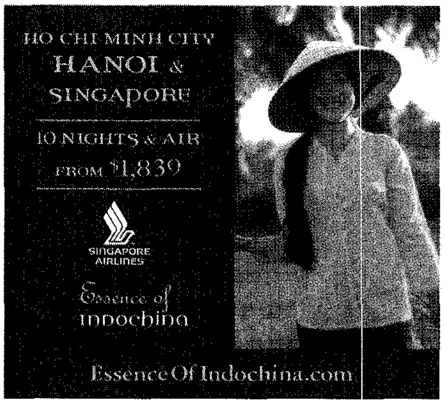

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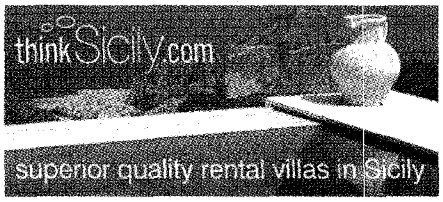

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THE KNOWLEDGE

BY HENRY ALFORD

In preparation for an expected onslaught of visitors to York, England, W. H. Auden's birth city, cab drivers have been memorizing some of his poetry. . . . When tourists arrive to celebrate the centenary of Mr. Auden's birth this year, their cabbies will recite his verse.

—*The Times.*

'E was me Norf, me Souf, me East and West,
Me working week and me Sund'y rest,
Me noon, me midnight, me talk, me song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

'E 'ad a gentleman friend, Mr. Auden did, dinnee? Bit of a trouser man, orroight? That seems to be the way nowadays, innit, wif actors and M.P.s and clergy and wot 'ave you. In my day, there weren't a need to fling yer spanky knackers into other folks' faces all jumble-wumble and 'ere's-mine-guv'nor. Though the missus *did* drag me to see Mr. Rudolf Nureyev at the ballet once. That man packed a full bag of groceries, dinnee?

Lady, weepin' at the crossroads,
Would yer maight yer love
In the twilight wif 'is greyhounds,
And the 'awk on 'is glove?

'Ello, 'ello—bit complicated, that one, it starts to go ower yer 'ead, so supposin' I shed some light on some of its more shadowy byways. Crooks and nannies it 'as. Now, this 'ere is wot they call parsin', not as in parse-the-butter-please-luv but as in parse-the-poem-so-we-don't-all-feel-like-bleedin'-eejits. What Mr. Auden is doin' in this one, I think, is forebodin' some of the messin' about we're currently seein' in the Middle East, a topic on which I 'ave a ready familiarity, 'avin' long been a fan o' the chickpea in its various fried and non-fried guises. The 'awk on the glove, of course, bein' yer vivid symbol of the U.S.'s imperialist leanin's and its might-makes-right attitude toward both its client states and other superpowers, orroight? Mr. Auden asks us, Is it roight that the country wif the most advantages should act this way? Course it ain't, guv'nor. But that's life, innit? 'Snot fair! 'Snot fair atall! The bone Mr. Auden would like us to chew on 'ere is the question: Does Mr. Bush 'ave any conception or understandin' of all this? Does 'e, then? Yer as welcome as Christmas to yer own opinion, but I think not. Mr. B. simply thinks 'e's sendin' a message to those wogs over in Arsefuckistan, if you'll pardon my parlay-voo. Problem is, the message ain't in their language, see? It's a birfday 'at on a cactus—needles where yer wants ears.

Self-drivers may curse their luck,
Stuck on new-fangled trails,
But the good old train'll jog
To the dogma of its rails.

Corblimey, 'e was good, Auden was! Prince of a writer. Don' fink 'e ever drove a cab, but 'e mighta done, 'e mighta done. The writah mightah tried-ah done. . . . Nah—'e was a tutor, professor, reviewer. Collaborator. If I remember my preparatory materials correctly, 'e was collegial-like wif Mr. Christopher Isherwood, and I believe the collegiality extended into other areas, such as each other's Y-fronts. But yer can 'ardly blame Auden, can yer? I mean, 'is mate's name was practically *I sure would.* So yer would, wouldn't yer? Of course yer would. I mean, Bob is, after all, yer uncle.

Sing, Ariel, sing,
Sweetly, dangerously
Out of the sour
And shiftless water,
Lucidly out
Of the dozin' tree,
Entrancin', rebukin'
The ragin' 'eart

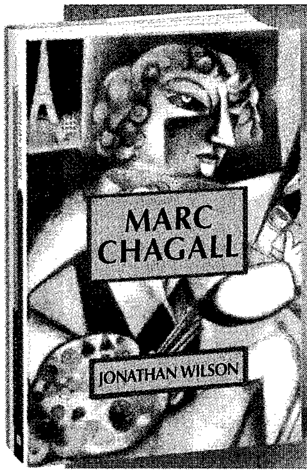
Wif a smoother song
Than this rough world,
Unfeelin' god.

This bit 'ere that I've memorized for the ed-you-fication and innertainment of me passengers is not entirely related to the followin' anecdote, orroight, but I will tell you that I once drove Miss Vicky Entwistle from "Coronation Street" all the way from Tower Street 'ere in York to Paddington Station. Very good tipper, Vicky Entwistle is. Very good, sure as nuts. I don' give two monkeys about 'er theatricalizin', but I'll praise her way round a pound note, I will. 'Er fans worship 'er, and the ol' gal worships 'em right back—as I always tell me wife, "We must love one another or die alone."

Yer need not see what someone is doin'
to know if it is 'is vocation,
yer 'ave only to watch 'is eyes:
a cook mixin' a sauce, a surgeon
makin' a primary incision,
a clerk completin' a bill of ladin',
wear the same rapt expression,
forgettin' 'emselves in a function.

But, see 'ere, I'm a driver, I am, so I can't intirely forget meself in a function, roight, I've got to keep me beady eyes peeled for—[*CRASH*]—Oh, crikey! Bleedin' Christ! Jaysus H. Christ. Are yer a'roight, guv? Dinnit see 'im comin'! Roight out o' nowhere 'e come! Eyes of a killer 'e 'as. 'Ow is't? Are yer able to move? 'Ere's an 'andkerchief for stanchin' purposes, orroight?

Oh, God in 'eaven, whatever 'ave we done to deserve this? Where's Auden when yer needs him? "Lady weepin' at the crossroads" doesn't even *begin* to describe it, now, duzzit? Nah, nah. But I suppose "unfeelin' God" 'as some of the resonance that we ask o' the classics. . . . Take the thick wif th' thin, and this were a bit o' thin, wot? Orroight, 'ang on, guv. 'Ang on. Just keep breavin'. We'll 'ave you in 'ospital in no time, sure as nuts. No time atall . . . Yer niver knows where a poem'll take yer, do yer? One minute yer parsin' some of the better Auden, and the next yer covered in blood, face down on the back seat of a cab that 'asn't 'ad a proper washin'-up since the Profumo affair. Nasty business, poetry. Nastier than a tainted cockle. More of a prose man, meself. ♦



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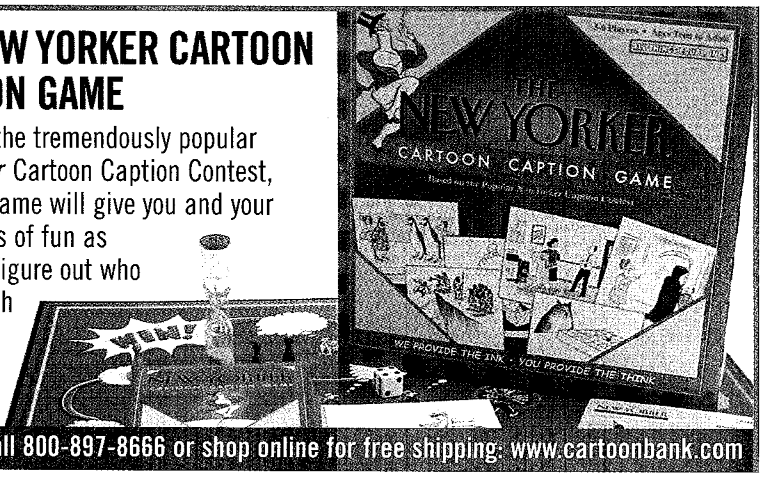

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PROFILES

THE NEXT CRUSADE

Paul Wolfowitz at the World Bank.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

The Selimiye Mosque, in Edirne, a city in northwest Turkey, is a magnificent stone edifice, with four minarets and an austere, octagonal-shaped body supporting a large dome. Built for Sultan Selim II in the sixteenth century, it has withstood numerous earthquakes and can accommodate more than five thousand kneeling worshippers. One evening at the end of January, I visited the mosque with Paul Wolfowitz, the president of the World Bank, and a half dozen of his aides and colleagues. Two years have passed since President Bush nominated Wolfowitz, the former Deputy Secretary of Defense and one of the architects of the war in Iraq, to head the sprawling multinational lending institution that has as its official goal "a world without poverty."

The World Bank employs thirteen thousand people in more than a hundred countries, and lends about twenty-five billion dollars a year to poor and middle-income nations. When Wolfowitz inspects bank programs, he often visits religious sites and other monuments. At the Selimiye Mosque, a stern-looking young man with a black beard who identified himself as the imam met us at the entrance and invited us inside. After putting on slippers, Wolfowitz entered the mosque and listened as the imam, demonstrating its acoustics, raised the call to Allah.

Wolfowitz has an abiding interest in the Islamic world. His father, Jacob, an eminent mathematician who taught at Columbia and Cornell, was a fervent Zionist, and Wolfowitz's elder sister, Laura, lives in Israel. Wolfowitz's critics sometimes portray him as an unquestioning defender of the Israeli government, and yet he has publicly expressed sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, and some Arab reformers regard him as a friend. Since separating from his wife of more than thirty years, Clare Selgin Wolfowitz, in 2001, he has dated a secular Muslim woman in her fifties, Shaha Ali Riza. A British national from a Libyan family who grew up in Saudi Arabia, Riza is a longtime advocate of democracy in Arab countries.

On a wall of the mosque was some ornate writing in Arabic. "Is that the Fatiha?" Wolfowitz asked, referring to a passage in the Koran. No, the imam replied, explaining that the writing was from another passage. Wolfowitz taught himself Arabic in the nineteen-eighties, when he was working at the State Department. (He also speaks French, German, Hebrew, and Indonesian.) Last year, during a visit to a mosque in eastern China, he recited a prayer from the Koran in Arabic. This time, as he was leaving the mosque, he encountered a dozen or so news photographers who had gathered to document his visit. Bending down to change back into his shoes, Wolfowitz removed a slipper, revealing a large hole in the toe of one gray wool sock. Then he removed the other slipper, exposing another hole. Shigeo Katsu, the World Bank's vice-president for Europe and Central Asia, tried to step between Wolfowitz and the photographers, but it was too late. The camera shutters clicked.

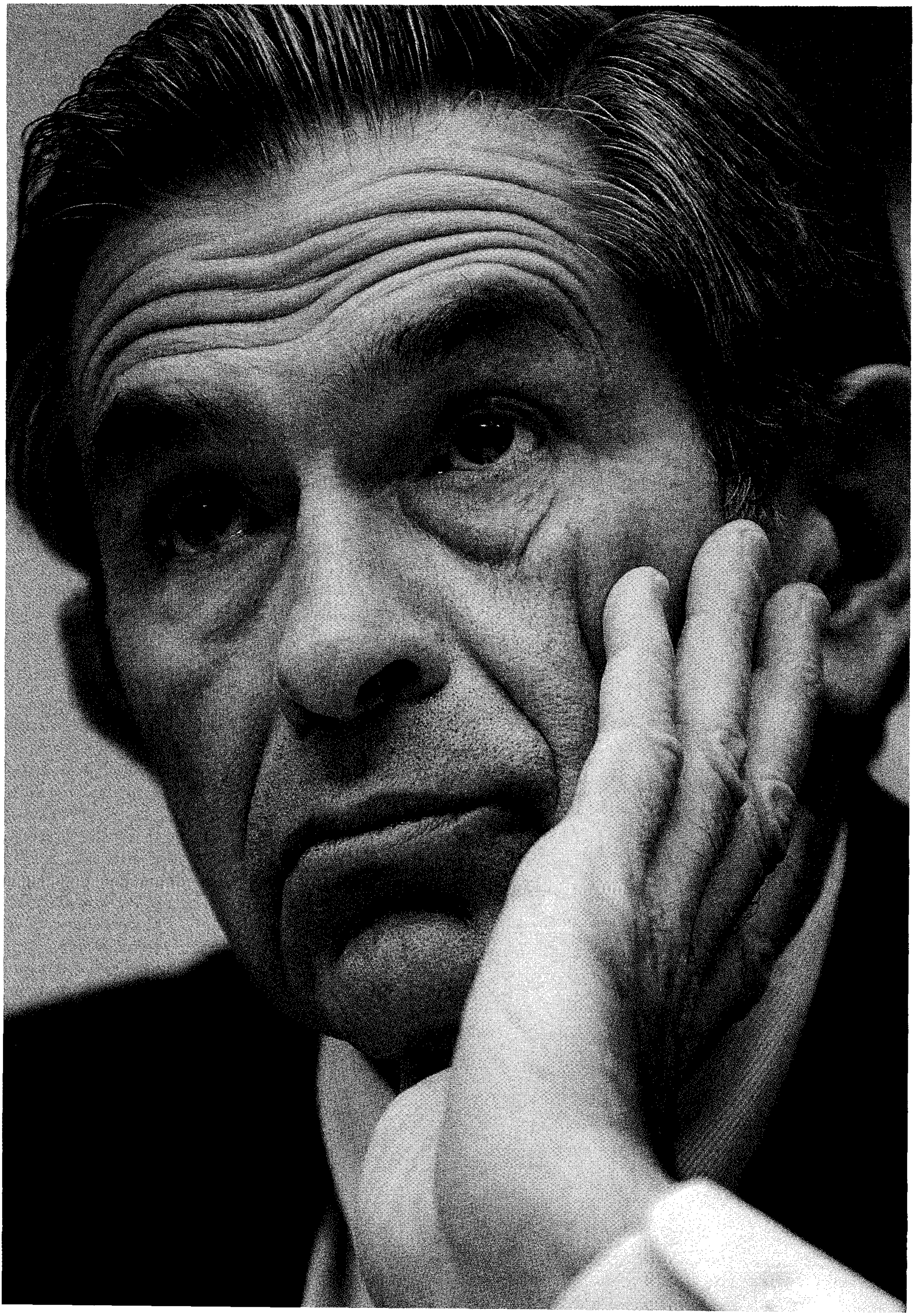
If Wolfowitz was perturbed, he didn't show it. He went next door to a covered market, where he examined the religious and cultural icons for sale. One of the venders urged him to buy some jewelry, but Wolfowitz didn't have enough cash. His spokesman and senior adviser, Kevin Kellems, gave him what he had, about seventeen dollars in Turkish lira. "I'm going to need more than that," Wolfowitz whispered. A member of the bank's Turkish staff handed him a hundred lira (about seventy dollars), and Wolfowitz bought two silver bracelets, for his daughters.

Wolfowitz, who is sixty-three, has jug ears, hazel eyes, a furrowed brow, and thinning gray hair that he combs to the right. He is a rumpled but unflappable traveller, seemingly oblivious of bad weather, uncomfortable transportation, and lack of sleep, as well as of the antiwar protesters who tend to appear wherever he goes. Since joining the World Bank, Wolfowitz has visited more than fifty countries, including remote parts of Africa and Asia. He is often depicted in the media as a neoconservative zealot, but on the road he is unfailingly polite, demonstrating a scholarly interest in local culture.

In Istanbul that morning, Wolfowitz had visited a homeless shelter run by the Turkish government with financial assistance from the World Bank. The shelter was in a nineteenth-century neighborhood, in a brick building on a cobbled street. After greeting the shelter's director, Wolfowitz and an interpreter entered a small room, containing four narrow beds and some metal chairs. Wolfowitz sat down next to a slight middle-aged man in a fraying denim jacket and a black wool cap, who said that his name was Bedir Yasa and that until recently he had been living on the streets.

Wolfowitz spoke softly to Yasa, who evidently had no idea who he was but responded with a puckish smile. Yasa said that he came from Van, near Iran, and that he wanted to work but had no skills. When Wolfowitz asked if he had any family, he said that his wife had been killed in the earthquake that struck western Turkey in 1999 and that her parents were bringing up his only child, a son, whom he rarely saw. Wolfowitz,

Most bank staff opposed Wolfowitz's presidency. An observer says that there's a perception that "his real agenda remains hidden."



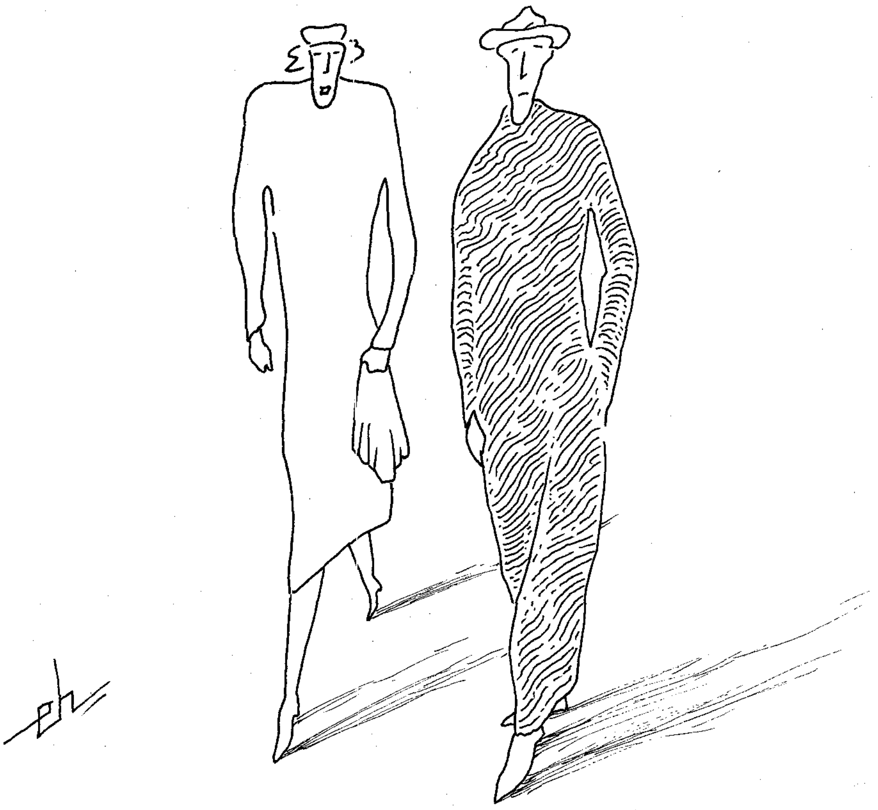
OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA USA

who has two daughters and a son, fell silent. "I'm sorry you have had such a tough life," he said finally. "I hope you can do better soon."

The World Bank was established in 1944, at a conference on postwar reconstruction in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where representatives of more than forty nations agreed to create two new institutions: the International Monetary Fund, which was charged with guaranteeing stability in global currency markets, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which was charged with raising money for the rebuilding of Europe. In December of 1945, twenty-nine countries signed the articles of agreement that formally incorporated the I.M.F. and the World Bank (as the I.B.R.D. came to be called) in Washington. A year and a half later, the World Bank made its first loan, to France. The United States government quickly became the main financer of European reconstruction, and the bank shifted its focus to developing countries. In 1948, it lent money to Chile. Two years later, it lent to Ethiopia. Before long, it was financing the construction of roads and dams throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

From its inception, the World Bank, which occupies an imposing thirteen-story building off Pennsylvania Avenue, a few blocks west of the White House, has represented a peculiar blend of idealism and Realpolitik. Harry White, a U.S. Treasury official who helped create the bank, said of its early borrowers, "There is nothing that will serve to drive these countries into some kind of ism—Communism or something else—faster than having inadequate capital." During the nineteen-sixties and seventies, the World Bank lent heavily to such countries as Indonesia and Zaire, which were considered bulwarks against Soviet encroachment. In the eighties and nineties, it pressed developing countries to lower import tariffs and encourage foreign investment, leading to accusations that it was acting in the interest of Western corporations.

The U.S. government, as the World Bank's biggest shareholder, has always asserted the right to appoint its president, and for twenty years it chose mostly financial executives. In the fall of 1967, President Lyndon Johnson broke with this tradition by nominating Robert McNamara, his Secretary of Defense and the chief strategist of the war in Vietnam. McNamara spent thirteen years at the bank, during which he increased its lending thirteen-fold, expanded its research department, and welcomed China as a member. "McNamara created the World Bank as it is known today," Ernest Stern, an American financier who was the bank's managing director from 1991 to 1995, told me. "He took over what was a fairly sleepy institution, focussed on infrastructure development, and he had a lot of ideas about new areas it should expand into: poverty, education, health care, family planning. None of these things had been on the bank's agenda before."



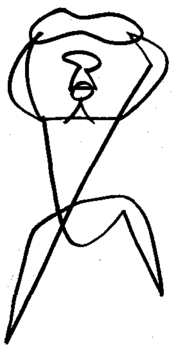
"All I ever wanted was one of those gizmos that allow time travel without violating the grandfather paradox, but, oh no, you had to have your damn model-train layout with automatic freight-shunting capability."

When President Bush nominated Wolfowitz to be the World Bank's president, in March, 2005, some perceived a historical analogy. Wolfowitz "may be . . . a latter-day Robert McNamara—a war-weary Pentagon master seeking refuge to wring the blood from his hands," the political columnist Fred Kaplan wrote in *Slate*. Most political analysts were critical of the nomination: Njoki Njoroge Njehu, who was then the director of a coalition of development pressure groups called the Fifty Years Is Enough Network, called Wolfowitz a "global symbol of U.S. imperialism"; even the conservative *Financial Times* argued that "the world would view a bank directed by Mr. Wolfowitz as no more than an instrument of U.S. power and U.S. priorities."

To many people, Wolfowitz is indelibly associated with the decision to invade Iraq and the doctrine of preëmptive war. In an Administration dominated by businessmen and Western conservatives, he was a prominent intellectual—a throwback to foreign-policy mandarins like Dean Acheson, McGeorge Bundy, and Walt Rostow, who provided the ideological rationale for the war in Vietnam. Wolfowitz called for deposing Saddam Hussein in 1997, when he was dean of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins. In an article published in *The Weekly Standard*, Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad, who is the outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, proposed diplomatic measures, support of Iraqi opposition groups, and "military force" as "part of an overall political strategy that sets as its goal not merely the containment of Saddam but the liberation of Iraq from his tyranny." After September 11th, Wolfowitz argued that Iraq's Baathist government had weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda, and that overthrowing Saddam would establish a model of peace and democracy in the Middle East. In February, 2003, three weeks before the invasion, Wolfowitz told Congress, "I am reasonably certain that they will greet us as liberators."

The World Bank is staffed by a well-paid, highly educated secretariat, the vast majority of whom are non-Americans. According to a survey conducted in April, 2005, nearly ninety per cent of the staff opposed Wolfowitz's nomination. A day after the bank's directors confirmed his appointment, *Bank Swirled*, a satirical magazine produced by bank employees, reported that a moving crew had delivered some personal items to his new office, "including a 1768 map of Iraq (with hundreds of red Xs denoting 'WMDs,' hundreds of black Xs denoting 'Oil Well$,' and one blue X denoting 'decent sushi restaurant') . . . a fully armed AH-64A/D Apache helicopter," and "a 'red phone' with a direct line to Karl Rove." Many people at the World Bank remain suspicious of Wolfowitz. He has suspended loans to developing countries that he regards as corrupt—among them Chad, Kenya, and Bangladesh—while expanding the bank's activities in places where the United States and its allies have intervened militarily, including Lebanon and Iraq. "Karl Rove would be proud: the man whom the world associates with the war in Iraq has recast himself as the crusader for good governance and development," Manish Bapna, the executive director of the Bank Information Center, a not-for-profit organization in Washington that monitors the bank's activities, said. "But inside the bank there is still a perception on the part of some staffers that his real agenda remains hidden, and that it reflects priorities from the Bush Administration."

Some negative reaction was to be expected; the World Bank, like many large bureaucracies, is resistant to change. Early in Wolfowitz's presidency, he announced that his priorities would include not just reducing poverty, especially in Africa (a focus of bank activity for decades), but also fighting corruption among governments that received bank aid (a project introduced by Wolfowitz's predecessor, James Wolfensohn). In July, 2005, a month after arriving at the bank, Wolfowitz attended the annual G8 summit, which took place at the Gleneagles Hotel, the Scottish golf resort. There, world leaders pledged to double aid to Africa by 2010, and to write off about forty billion dollars in debt that eighteen impoverished countries, mostly African, owed the World Bank, the I.M.F., and the African Development Bank. The G8 finance ministers had previously agreed on these measures, and Wolfowitz enthusiastically endorsed them. He also attended a "Live 8" concert that Bono and Bob Geldof, the Irish pop singers and antipoverty activists, organized at a local rugby stadium. "There's a lot of things we can disagree on, and we disagree on Iraq," Jamie Drummond, the director of DATA (Debt, AIDS, and Trade in Africa), a nonprofit organization that he co-founded with Bono and others, told me. "But what can we agree on? Getting kids to school in Africa, fighting AIDS in Africa, fighting corruption in Africa. We came to Paul right from the start saying that he should be on the record supporting our push on debt, AIDS, and trade, and he was very passionately on message on all of that."



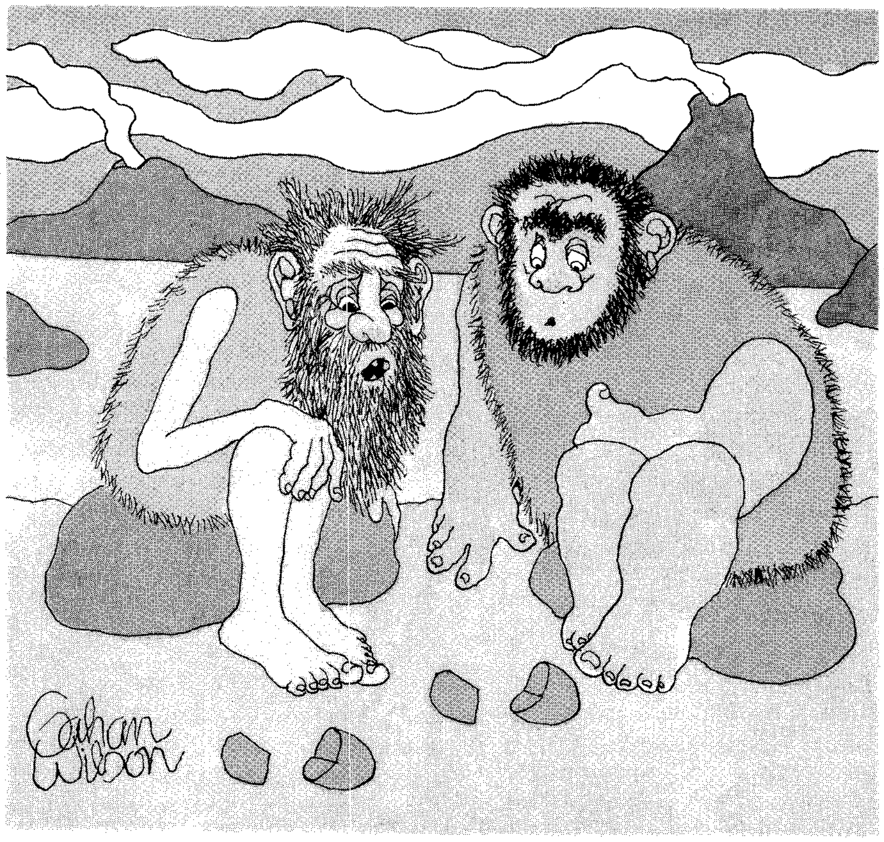
On Wolfowitz's way to Turkey in January, he spent a day and a half in Davos, Switzerland, at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, where, in panel discussions and in private meetings with politicians, development experts, and business leaders, he repeatedly invoked the Gleneagles agreement and called for Western governments to provide more aid to Africa. At a lunch meeting with African leaders, he said, "I like globalization; I want to say it works, but it is hard to say that when six hundred million people are slipping backwards."

That afternoon, he took part in a panel on foreign aid with Bill Gates, whose philanthropic foundation has an endowment of $30.6 billion; William Easterly, an economist at New York University who is a well-known skeptic of development policy; and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former bank official who is the President of Liberia. The discussion was held in a large auditorium, and every seat was taken. Gates and Easterly quickly got into an argument about the efficacy of aid programs. Easterly pointed out that research had failed to demonstrate any link between aid and economic growth. In the past forty-two years, he said, Africans have received five hundred and sixty-eight billion dollars in aid, yet there has been no appreciable improvement in their living standards.

Gates, whose foundation has invested billions of dollars in programs and initiatives in Africa, many of which relate to public health, reacted angrily. He disputed Easterly's statistics and declared, "When we put people on AIDS drugs, we don't say to them, 'Hey, unless you raise the G.D.P.' "—gross domestic product—" 'we have wasted our money.' . . . I think life has value. . . . What happened with smallpox—that was aid work."

Many conservative Republicans agree with Easterly that aid has done little good, an argument that Wolfowitz has resisted. After listening to the sharp exchange between Gates and Easterly, Wolfowitz conceded that much aid money has been misused—he cited Mobutu Sese Seko, the former ruler of Zaire, who reportedly pocketed five billion dollars from aid agencies, including the World Bank. But Wolfowitz also defended the idea of giving more cash to well-run countries. "Good policies, good governance is essential," he said. "But when you have those, resources are essential. You can't do it without investment. And I think that's where development assistance really plays its role."

After the session ended, Wolfowitz met privately with Gates and his wife, Melinda. The World Bank and the Gates Foundation already work together in many parts of Africa, and Wolfowitz is eager to extend this coöperation to other parts of the world. Some people in the development community regard the increasing influence of private foundations as a threat to the bank's position, but Wolfowitz believes that private capital can complement the efforts of aid agencies. "It's wonderful that so many people



"There—now I've taught you everything I know about splitting rocks."

• •

want to contribute to fighting AIDS or malaria," he told me. "But, if somebody isn't paying attention to the over-all health system in the country, a whole lot of money can be wasted."

Wolfowitz objects to being called a neoconservative; he considers himself a pragmatist. Like many neocons, though, he comes from a Jewish intellectual family and in his youth he supported liberal causes. In 1963, when he was nineteen, he and his mother attended the civil-rights march on Washington organized by Martin Luther King, Jr., and other leaders. Wolfowitz majored in mathematics and chemistry at Cornell. There his interest in politics was fostered by Allan Bloom, the political theorist who later wrote "The Closing of the American Mind." Bloom was a fellow at Telluride House, a residence for gifted students, where Wolfowitz lived. Although his father wanted him to stick with the hard sciences, Wolfowitz went on to the University of Chicago, to study for a Ph.D. in political science. "I told my father I had to try political science for a year," Wolfowitz said recently. "He thought I was throwing my life away."

Wolfowitz began to move to the right in Chicago, where he attended Leo Strauss's lectures on Plato and Montesquieu. Much has been made of Strauss's influence on Wolfowitz—in particular, Strauss's rejection of moral relativism and his denunciation of totalitarian regimes. A more significant influence, Wolfowitz says, was Albert Wohlstetter, an ardent anti-Communist and an expert on nuclear-weapons strategy who was his dissertation adviser. With Wohlstetter's encouragement, Wolfowitz went to Washington in the summer of 1969 to work for the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy, a nonprofit group that lobbied Congress to support the construction of an anti-ballistic weapons system. (At the committee, Wolfowitz met Richard Perle, who became a colleague in the Reagan Administration.)

In 1973, Wolfowitz, who had been teaching at Yale, joined the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, where he was among a group of hawks who reacted skeptically to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreement, which Henry Kissinger had negotiated with the Soviet Union. Three years later, Wolfowitz became a member of Team B, a group of independent experts who had been invited by the then C.I.A. director, George H. W. Bush, to challenge what some conservatives believed were naïve assessments of Soviet military intentions. "He did his work competently, he attended all of the meetings, but he didn't say much," Richard Pipes, the Harvard historian who oversaw the project, recalled. "He was probably the quietest member of the group." Team B concluded—erroneously, according to other analysts—that the Kremlin believed the Soviets could win a nuclear war.

During the Carter Administration, Wolfowitz worked at the Pentagon. In late 1980, after Carter lost his bid for reëlection to Ronald Reagan, Fred Iklé, Wolfowitz's former boss at the arms-control agency, who was an adviser to Reagan, called him. "I said, 'It's about time you got out of the Carter Administration and joined us,'" Iklé remembered. "He was regarded as an expert. He was on the hard-line, or conservative, side." In the Reagan Administration, Wolfowitz worked in the State Department, first as director of the policy-planning office, and then as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

More than some other prominent neoconservatives, such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, he stressed the promotion of democratic values abroad. In his office at the World Bank, there is a photograph from 1986 that shows him in the White House situation room with other senior members of the Reagan Administration, as they discussed whether to abandon Ferdinand Marcos, the Philippine dictator and longtime American ally. Wolfowitz urged his colleagues to support Marcos's rival, Corazon Aquino, who had overwhelming popular support. "There were quite a few prominent and self-identified neoconservatives who thought we were leaning too hard on nice Mr. Marcos, who was America's best friend," Wolfowitz recalled recently. "I take that as an example of where I don't think there was any ideology telling me what to do."

Until the end of the nineteen-seventies, Wolfowitz was a registered Democrat, and some of his friends still consider him a progressive. "Paul is a bit of a softie," Karl Jackson, a political scientist at the Paul H. Nitze School for Advanced International Affairs, at Johns Hopkins, whom Wolfowitz hired as a part-time consultant to the bank, told me. "He really believes in helping people who are economically deprived or who just have nasty or corrupt governments. Some people would classify that as conservative, but it doesn't fit the bill in my book." Christopher Hitchens, the *Vanity Fair* columnist, who has entertained the bank president at his home on several occasions, told me that "the most surprising thing about Wolfowitz is that he's a bleeding heart. His instincts are those of a liberal democrat, apart from on national security."

In the nineteen-nineties, Wolfowitz backed NATO's interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and he insists that he supports a multilateral foreign policy. "I wish somebody would go and read the essay I wrote for the Trilateral Commission," he said to me one day. "It was basically about the idea that the shifts in the global balance of power mean that the U.S. is increasingly going to have to work with other countries. But the great thing that the U.S. has going for it is that the ideals it stands for and represents are in the self-interest of most countries." The essay was published in 1997, under the title "Managing Our Way to a Peaceful Century." It argued that the universal appeal of democratic values was "one of our most powerful tools for shaping the emerging world," but added, "This doesn't mean that we can dictate the course of political development in other countries. Our ability to influence may often be quite modest. If we are not careful, our influence may even be negative."

Why did Wolfowitz ignore this caution six years later, in making the case for the invasion of Iraq? "I think Paul thought that Iraq, as the most secular of the Middle Eastern countries, had the best chance of establishing a democracy," Fred Iklé said.

Wolfowitz refused to talk about Iraq specifically, but he told me that he still believes in the vision of a moderate, democratic Middle East. "I think, in the longer view of things, there is a very powerful pull in the direction of participatory government," he said. "People discover that it's the path to prosperity. And, yes, there are some violent forces that don't want to see it happen, but it is what appeals to the great bulk of people, and it is a system that, in peace, produces great success." Even in the long term, Wolfowitz's optimism depends on the assumption that there will be enough moderates in the Middle East to prevail over the political and religious zealots. "I have always believed that the overwhelming majority of Muslims are mainstream, relatively tolerant people," he said. The events of the past decade have given Wolfowitz pause, he conceded. "But I still fundamentally believe that tolerance is the dominant stream and should ultimately win out."

Under the World Bank's articles of agreement, it is prohibited from interfering in politics. For many years, this stricture was taken to mean that the bank shouldn't discuss the bribery and graft that afflicted many of the biggest beneficiaries of its aid. In 1996, James Wolfensohn, Wolfowitz's predecessor, violated this taboo by publicly referring to the "cancer of corruption" in developing countries. Two years later, the bank's research department published an influential paper, "Assessing Aid," which argued that aid is effective only when it is given to countries with honest governments and efficient economic policies.

Wolfowitz was determined to follow Wolfensohn's lead. In one of his first board meetings, he asked, "Why are we lending to Cambodia? It's such a corrupt country." Previous bank presidents, including Wolfensohn, had been reluctant to cut off lending, for fear of harming the people whom the bank's projects were intended to help. Wolfowitz wasn't persuaded by this argument—according to some estimates, up to twenty per cent of economic aid is misused or stolen—and a few months after he arrived at the bank he appointed Suzanne Rich Folsom as head of the Department of Institutional Integrity, the bank's internal-investigations unit, which follows up allegations of fraud in bank projects.

Folsom is a Washington ethics lawyer with strong ties to the Republican Party. (Her husband, George Folsom, a foreign-policy specialist, worked for the Administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.) Before Wolfowitz's arrival, the bank had enlisted the help of an executive-search firm, which, out of a large pool of candidates, identified nine finalists. After reviewing these names, Wolfowitz rejected them all and selected Folsom, whom Wolfensohn had hired to help him deal with the Treasury Department and the Republican-controlled Congress, and who had been acting as the department's interim head. According to one of Wolfowitz's aides, he regarded Folsom as eminently qual-

"I don't know if a nap is part of God's plan for me."

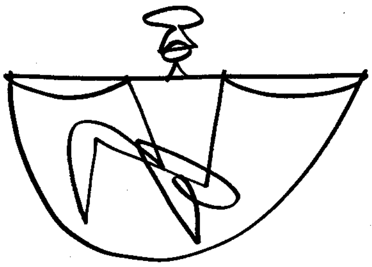
fied for the job, and he was also impressed by her performance at the investigations department. Others at the bank saw things differently. "Paul turned around to the world and said that she was appointed following an international search," one senior official who has now left the bank said to me. "That was technically true. There was an international search. But she was not part of that search. He shredded the list and then brought in a loyalist from the Republican Party."

Under Folsom, the budget for the Department of Institutional Integrity nearly doubled. In the department's 2006 annual report, it acknowledged a "considerable" jump in allegations against bank staffers. However, it added, there had been no increase in the number of allegations leading to disciplinary action. "Anybody can call in a complaint," a former World Bank manager told me, "and the investigators keep hanging over the person's shoulder. To people who have never been accused of corruption in their lives, it's extraordinarily demoralizing."

Before long, Wolfowitz became personally involved in the anti-corruption campaign. In September of 2005, he told a reporter for the *Financial Times*, "I think I feel even more strongly than before that you can't talk intelligently about development if you exclude anything that sounds political." That May, the government of Uzbekistan had violently suppressed an uprising in the city of Andijan, in which as many as seven hundred people, including women and children, were killed. In July, Islam A. Karimov, Uzbekistan's dictatorial ruler, ordered the United States to remove its troops and aircraft from the Uzbek base it had been using to support the military campaign in Afghanistan. Around the same time, the Uzbek government expelled a number of Western nongovernmental organizations. Since joining the World Bank, in 1992, Uzbekistan had received more than five hundred million dollars in loans, mostly for rural water and health projects. In September, 2005, Wolfowitz withdrew an assistance package for Uzbekistan that was about to be presented to the bank's board for approval. "It came out of the blue," Dennis de Tray, who was country director for central Asia at the time, told me. "I got a call while I was on vacation and was told that he just did it. He didn't even talk to the regional vice-president. We were all pretty shell-shocked." Wolfowitz told me that his action had nothing to do with military bases or the U.S. government. "Nobody was instructing me to get out of Uzbekistan," he said. "My one concern, pure and simple, was that, given the human-rights violations, we couldn't have any confidence in what was happening to our money."

The following October, the government of Chad, the former French colony in equatorial Africa, announced that it would amend a law controlling the spending of revenue from an oil pipeline that the bank had helped finance. According to the law, eighty per cent of proceeds from the pipeline were reserved for anti-poverty projects, such as schools and health centers. That month, *Forbes* reported that thirty million dollars of the revenue had been used to purchase arms. Wolfowitz called Chad's President, Idriss Déby, and warned him not to change the law. Déby said that he needed to spend more money on his armed forces because of a refugee crisis on Chad's border with Sudan, near Darfur, and in December the Chadian National Assembly passed amendments to the law, reducing the amount of oil revenue reserved for antipoverty projects. In January, 2006, Wolfowitz halted all bank lending to Chad.

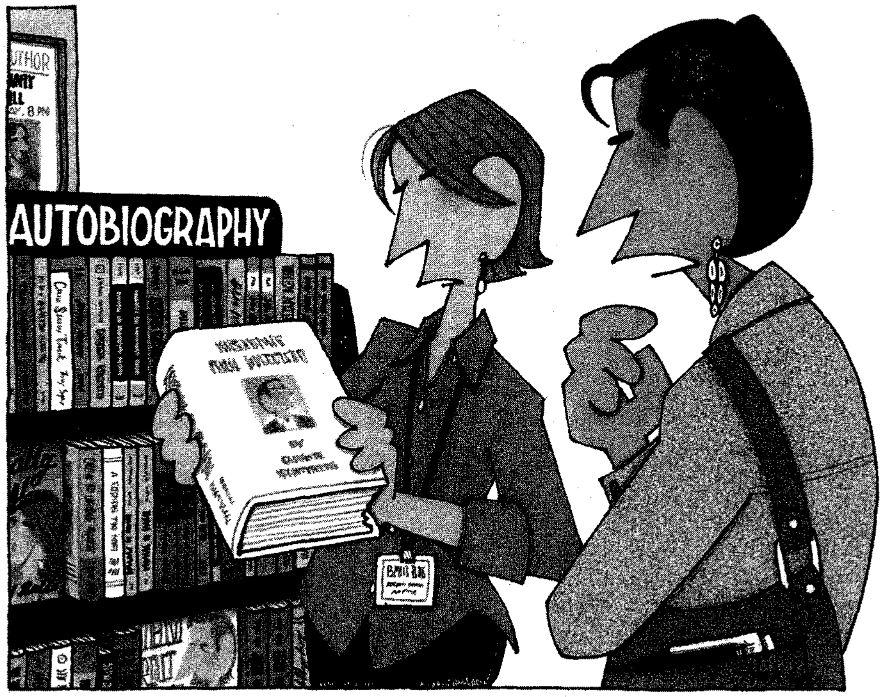
On February 12, 2006, the London *Sunday Times* reported that Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the President of Congo-Brazzaville, another former French colony in central Africa, had spent more than three hundred thousand dollars on hotel rooms during a visit to New York for a U.N. General Assembly session. Shortly before the article appeared, the bank's Africa department had reached a provisional agreement with Congo-Brazzaville about writing off some of the country's debt. Wolfowitz demanded a number of changes to the deal. "He was feeling incensed by the fact that anyone would spend almost half a million dollars on hotel bills," a bank official said to me.



As president of the World Bank, Wolfowitz supervises virtually all of its daily operations. However, the bank's board of twenty-four executive directors is ultimately responsible for its lending and policy activities. Votes on the board are distributed according to how much money each country has contributed to the bank's capital. The United States controls about sixteen per cent of the votes, but the four next-biggest shareholders—Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—can outvote it. This governing structure puts a premium on the bank president's ability to forge a consensus, but Wolfowitz has often seemed determined simply to ignore the board. "They always give us ninety-eight per cent of what we want, so why should we bother about them?" he said to a senior colleague shortly after arriving at the bank. The colleague explained that the board usually obliged the president because the president usually cultivated its members.

Unlike McNamara, who was president of the Ford Motor Company before he joined the Pentagon, Wolfowitz had little experience running a large bureaucracy. In his work at both the State Department and the Department of Defense, he was known as a strategist. In 1982, when the job of Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs became available and Wolfowitz asked for it, his boss, George Shultz, hesitated before granting the request. "I said to him, 'Well, Paul, this is not just thinking about things; you've got to do things,'" Shultz recalled. "He was put in there, and he did an excellent job." Still, doubts about Wolfowitz's administrative abilities persisted. Bob Woodward, in his most recent book about the Iraq war, "State of Denial," reports that Wolfowitz was passed over for the job of Presidential envoy to Iraq in favor of L. Paul Bremer III. "The president knew that Wolfowitz did not have a strong reputation as a manager," Woodward writes. "The deputy secretary of defense was a thinker, but he could barely run his own office."

At the World Bank, Wolfowitz soon made it clear that he would leave many of



"Perhaps someone who lived life a bit less fully."

his administrative duties to others. At internal meetings, he indicated the policy areas that were important to him, but he seldom got involved in the details of implementing them. Rather than appointing bank staffers as his principal aides, as previous presidents had done, Wolfowitz hired two American political operatives who were closely associated with the war in Iraq: Robin Cleveland, who had been the associate director for National Security Programs at the White House Office of Management and Budget; and Kevin Kellems, who had been with Wolfowitz at the Pentagon. Perhaps inevitably, Cleveland and Kellems antagonized many on the bank's staff. "Their attitude was: We are brighter than other people, we know more than other people," a bank veteran who recently left told me. "They were unaccountable because they had no direct-line authority. Officially, they were just advisers to the president, but in fact they were calling the shots."

Cleveland, in particular, incited hostility. On Capitol Hill, where she had worked for Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, of Kentucky, she was known as "the dragon lady," because of her aggressive approach to negotiations. In 2002, she moved to the Office of Management and Budget, where she helped to provide financing for the Iraq war, and for President Bush's AIDS initiative. More than half a dozen current and former bank staff members gave me critical assessments of Cleveland. "She is vindictive to the core," one said. Cleveland, who often acts as a trouble-shooter for Wolfowitz, conceded that she can be demanding. "I am impatient, and I apologize for that, but it's impatience in trying to get things done," she said. "We are only here for a short time, and there are incredibly important things to do." Kellems, a low-key Midwesterner, provoked less controversy at the bank, though some called him "the keeper of the comb"—a reference to the film "Fahrenheit 9/11," in which Wolfowitz is shown preparing for a television appearance by spitting on his comb before applying it to his hair.

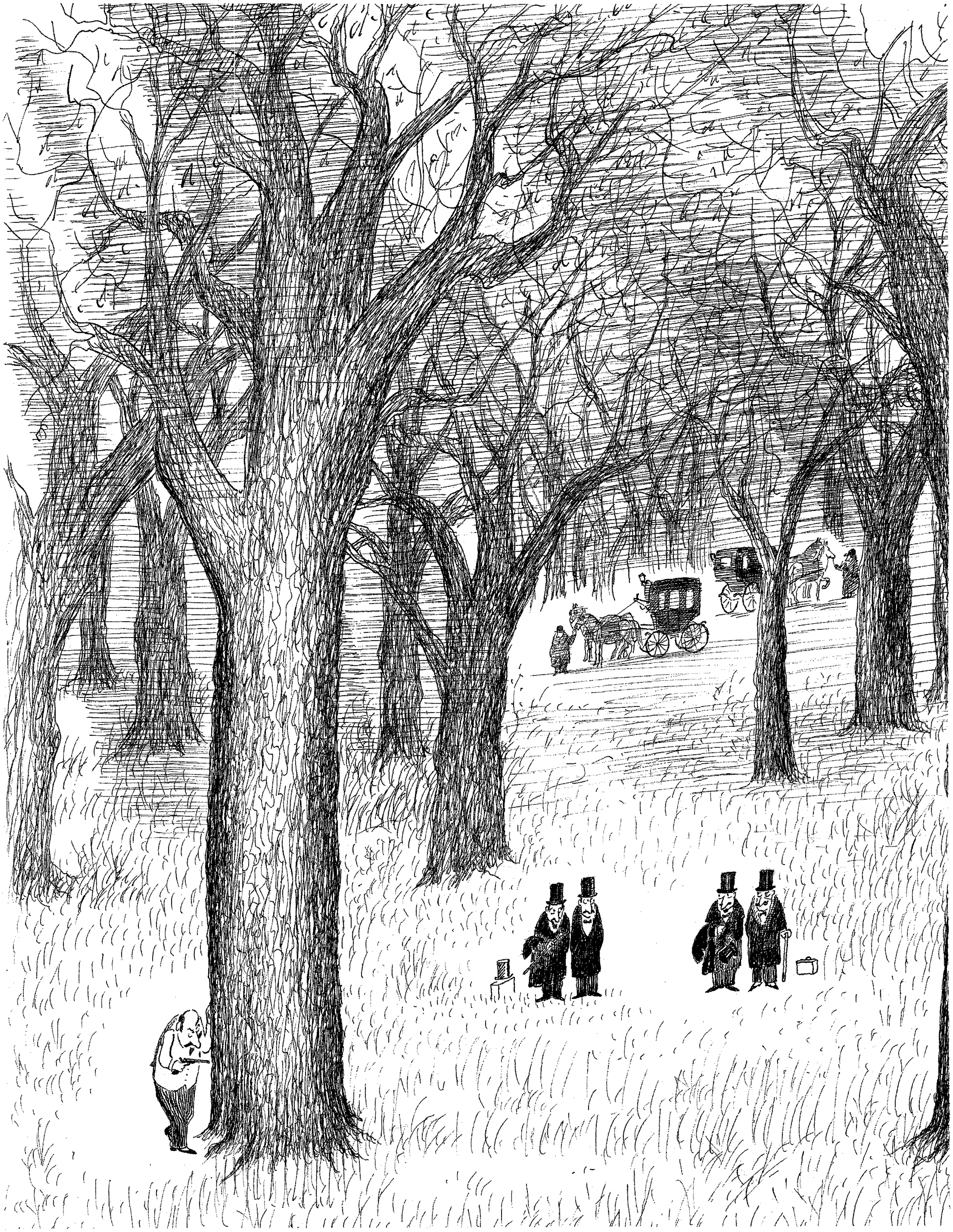
Since Wolfowitz's arrival, about a dozen senior officials at the World Bank have quit, including the managing director, the general counsel, the chief financial officer, and six vice-presidents. Shengman Zhang, a Chinese national who was a managing director for almost ten years, left in December, 2005. "Shengman was bypassed, provoked, and humiliated by Wolfowitz's aides," one of his former colleagues told me. "They would say, 'Don't tell Shengman you are doing that; I'm telling you to do it.' " (Shengman, who now works for Citigroup, declined to speak with me.)

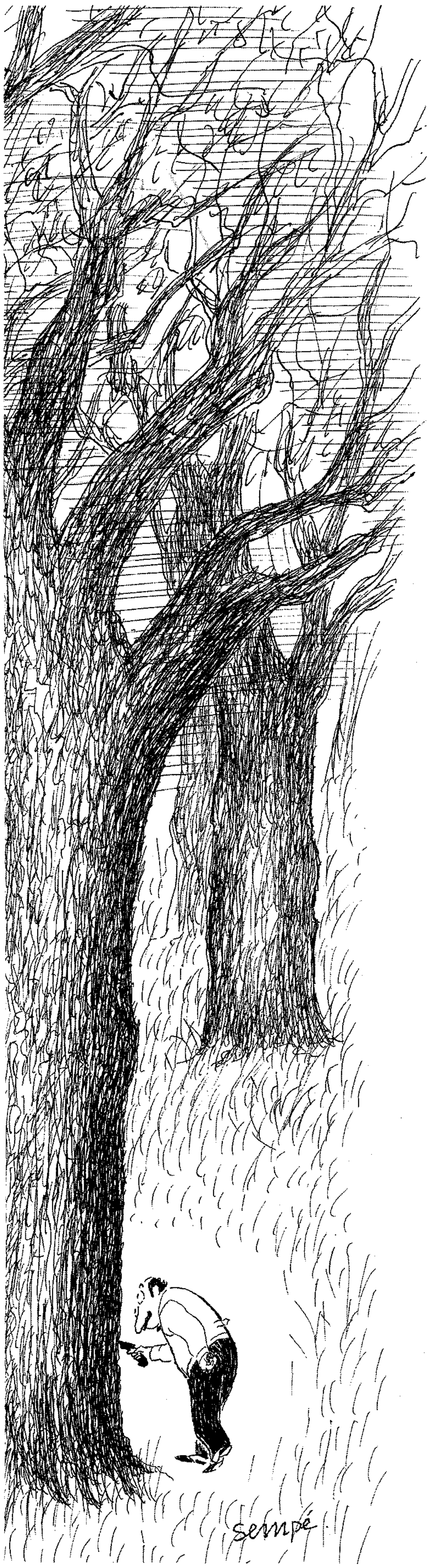
The incident that prompted the most comment internally involved Shaha Ali Riza. When Wolfowitz was nominated to the bank presidency, he disclosed his relationship with Riza, who was working in the bank's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) department. Under the bank's regulations, spouses or partners are prohibited from supervising one another or from working in the same cone of authority. As president, Wolfowitz oversees a cone of authority encompassing nearly all the bank's employees, including those in MENA. The board of directors' ethics committee took the view that Riza should be transferred to a position outside his supervision. Wolfowitz asked that she be allowed to maintain her job at MENA and to work with him as necessary, offering to recuse himself from any decisions concerning her pay and work conditions. "It really gave a bad impression, especially for somebody who was making a big issue of good governance," a former senior official at the bank said. "The president is supposed to set an example to everybody, and yet here he wanted to have his girlfriend working with him, which is flatly prohibited under bank rules."

Ultimately, Riza was seconded to the State Department. To compensate her for the disruption of her career at the bank, she was promoted to the managerial level, and she has received two pay raises, bringing her salary to a hundred and ninety-three thousand dollars—more than Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice makes. "The staff are very upset," Alison Cave, the chairman of the World Bank Staff Group Association, said, explaining that the raises amounted to special treatment that violated established bank guidelines. Kevin Kellems told me that Wolfowitz had no involvement in Riza's promotion or pay raises. "All arrangements concerning Shaha Ali Riza were made at the direction of the board of directors," he said.

Wolfowitz landed at Atatürk International Airport, in Istanbul, at nine in the evening. The World Bank has about twenty projects in Turkey, and advises the government in Ankara on economic policy. Turkey is an example of a middle-income country that is rapidly

SKETCHBOOK BY J.J. SEMPÉ





modernizing and integrating itself into the world economy. It is also a vital Western ally: a stable, moderate Muslim democracy straddling Europe and Asia. "I made my first visit to Turkey in 1976, and it impressed me enormously," Wolfowitz told a group of local politicians who greeted him at the gate. "Turkey is a very strategic country, which means it has some unpleasant neighbors. It is good to have a stable democracy in such a region."

After spending the night at the Hilton, Wolfowitz had breakfast with about a dozen representatives of Turkish youth groups and visited the homeless shelter. Then he was driven to Dolmabahçe Palace, on the banks of the Bosporus, where he met the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who heads the Justice and Development Party. In early 2003, legislators from the Party supported an American request to use southern Turkey as a staging ground for the Iraq invasion, but the proposal was voted down in parliament. Wolfowitz later said to me, "I think it is very impressive that this party, which traditionally has been the most Islamic party in Turkey, is the one that is committed to modernization and reform."

Not long afterward, Wolfowitz, half a dozen of his colleagues, and I boarded a Turkish military helicopter in the garden of the Dolmabahçe Palace. We made a sweeping turn over the Bosporus and flew northwest for about an hour. The first stop was in a town called Lüleburgaz, the headquarters of Sisecam, a Turkish glass manufacturer that has received funding from the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank subsidiary. Wolfowitz, wearing a hard hat and protective goggles, stared into furnaces, chatted with workers, and handled some of the glassware that Sisecam supplies to Wal-Mart and Crate & Barrel. Recently, Sisecam has bought factories in Russia and Georgia and invested in a plant in Bulgaria. The idea of a Turkish manufacturer competing successfully in the world market seemed to impress Wolfowitz. He asked the firm's president, Dogan Arikan, if he was thinking about investing in stable African countries, such as Tanzania. Not at the moment, Arikan replied.

We then flew to Kirklareli, a remote village where the bank had helped finance irrigation canals. After landing on a soccer field near a school, Wolfowitz was escorted to a classroom, where about thirty farmers and their families presented him with a souvenir plate. A burly young man stood up and said that the existing open-irrigation system was fine, but that the village really needed a closed system. Wolfowitz turned to a bank staffer and asked if there were plans to upgrade the system. The official gave a long and evasive answer, which seemed to add up to no. "That was perhaps not the greatest project the World Bank has ever supported," Wolfowitz said when we were back in the helicopter. "Perhaps we should have spent more time at the glass factory, but you never know in advance."

In Edirne, on our way to the Selimiye Mosque, we stopped at a small house in a poor neighborhood largely inhabited by Gypsies. In the living room were Hüsniye Mine, a fifty-one-year-old Turkish woman; her disabled husband, Tuncay; her son, Sahan; and her daughter, Tugçe. Wolfowitz sat on a couch next to Sahan, who said to him, in English, "I am fourteen years old." The family was receiving money from the Turkish government, under a program, financed in part by the bank, that encourages poor parents to keep their children in school. Hüsniye showed Wolfowitz her son's and daughter's report cards, which indicated that they were both on the honor roll. Wolfowitz asked Sahan, a skinny kid with brown hair and big brown eyes, what he did when he wasn't in school. Sahan replied that he played soccer and chess, and Wolfowitz's eyes lit up. "I played chess when I was about your age, and I was pretty good for a while," he said. "Then my friends started studying the great chess players, and they would play the old games over again, and then I couldn't keep up with them." Sahan seemed impressed. "I am not that good, but I got a medal," he said. "I came third in the province."

In the first half of last year, Wolfowitz stepped up his anti-corruption campaign, suspending aid projects in India, Kenya, and Cambodia until allegations of corruption were resolved. (In these and other cases, the bank and the governments involved eventually settled their differences, and lending was resumed.) "What Paul is doing," Karl Jackson, the bank consultant, told me, "is moving toward a system that says to poor governments, 'If you want to steal from a project, we all'—the whole development community—'will say that we are not going to lend you any more money until you demonstrate improved governance.'" Expressed this way, Wolfowitz's actions seem eminently reasonable. "Transferring large amounts of money to corrupt governments isn't just a waste of money; it is counter-productive," Roger Bate, an expert on development policy at the American Enterprise Institute, said. "I've seen that in Nigeria, Uganda, and Ethiopia. But it takes a lot of courage to say we are going to withhold funds. There is a lot of pressure to continue business as usual."

However, current and former World Bank officials, as well as a number of bank shareholders, have questioned Wolfowitz's actions. Why were projects being suspended in India and not in Indonesia, which by many measures is more corrupt? Why Uzbekistan and not Tajikistan? Why Congo-Brazzaville and not the Democratic Republic of the Congo? "No one in the development community really understands what criteria we should use to withhold lending from poor countries," Nancy Birdsall, the head of the Center for Global Development, a Washington think tank, said. "And they certainly didn't understand what criteria were being used at the bank in the past year or so." Roberto Dañino, the bank's former general counsel, who resigned last year, said, "Paul needs to adopt a more balanced approach. Anti-corruption is not a silver bullet. You can have a country that is transparent, with no corruption problem, but if it doesn't follow the right economic policy it won't grow. That is what he is missing."

A number of economists criticize Wolfowitz for exaggerating the role that corruption plays in retarding economic growth. "There are a lot of countries that we know perfectly well are corrupt but which have done very well economically," John Williamson, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said. "Suharto's Indonesia is an example." (Wolfowitz was Ambassador to Indonesia from 1986 to 1989.) Joseph Stiglitz, who served as the World Bank's chief economist from 1997 to 2000, and later won a Nobel Prize, said, "China has had an impressive record of growth and poverty reduction, and yet by many measures it does not score well on corruption."

"Maybe we're not the salt of the earth, but we're the salt of the Upper East Side."

Many of Wolfowitz's critics suspect that his motive in fighting corruption is political rather than economic. "I think he was completely genuine in the notion of bringing Western-style democracy to Iraq, the Middle East, and other areas," Dennis de Tray said to me. "That hasn't changed. He's still committed to that agenda, and I think he sees the bank as another instrument to achieve what I see as long-held goals. The focus on 'corruption' and 'good governance'—for him, those are code words for democracy and human rights. He knows he can't use those words publicly, because the bank's charter says we can't engage with politics. But he goes pretty close by saying we are not going to deal with corrupt regimes anymore."

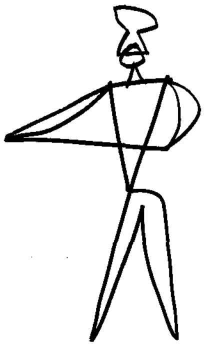
When I asked Wolfowitz about the criticism that his agenda at the bank is political, he said, "I just don't see how anyone can separate concern about good governance from concern about helping poor people survive and get a good education and good jobs. It's all part of the same thing. There is no political agenda here. Any country that uses our money well—measured not by political standards but by what that country is doing for the poor—gets our support and will continue to get our support."

On February 24, 2006, the World Bank's board of executive directors met to discuss Wolfowitz's demand for changes to Congo-Brazzaville's debt-reduction agreement. The meeting, which lasted more than eight hours, was tense. Under the bank's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative, which began in 1996, impoverished countries are entitled to have some of their debts forgiven when they meet a series of economic targets, such as controlling inflation and liberalizing their economies. The bank's staff had certified that Congo-Brazzaville had met its targets for provisional debt relief. In addition to trying to restrict how the Congolese government could use the money it would save on servicing its debt, Wolfowitz demanded further changes to the agreement. Some board members argued that he was overstepping his authority. "Wolfowitz was trying to change a procedure that had been agreed to by the G8, the I.M.F., and the bank," one member told me. Twenty-two of the twenty-four board members opposed Wolfowitz's demands, and he was forced to back down on some of them.

Two months after the meeting, the World Bank's Development Committee, its principal advisory body, which is made up of government ministers from member countries, asked Wolfowitz to provide a set of guidelines for his anti-corruption drive. Even some of Wolfowitz's allies believed that this was a good idea. "I said to him, If you do cherry-picking on anti-corruption, you are going to turn the bank into a U.S. foreign-policy instrument," a former official, who recently left the bank, said. "People will say you are rewarding the U.S.'s friends and punishing its enemies. Even if you don't mean it that way, people will think that is what has happened." Wolfowitz agreed to present a strategy paper at the World Bank's annual meeting, which was held in Singapore last September. Over the summer, Robin Cleveland and other members of his staff worked on the paper, which grew to more than sixty pages.

On September 13th, six days before the Singapore meeting, Hilary Benn, the British Secretary of State for International Development, announced that the United Kingdom was withholding from the World Bank a fifty-million-pound payment, to protest the conditions the bank attached to aid. In a speech in London, Benn objected to Wolfowitz's actions on corruption: "Where problems arise, some people argue that we should suspend our aid or withdraw it completely. I don't agree. Why should a child be denied education? Why should a mother be denied healthcare? Or an H.I.V.-positive person AIDS treatment, just because someone or something in their government is corrupt?" A former bank official who worked closely with the British delegation to the bank said that Benn was reacting to what Britain perceived as Wolfowitz's unilateralism. "The Brits really think the bank is the best thing we've got for development, and that it should be run as a real multilateral agency," this person said. "They felt that they were being gratuitously smacked around by Wolfowitz."

In Singapore, Wolfowitz was rebuked by the Development Committee, which reserved for the bank's board the right to determine how the anti-corruption policy would be finalized and executed. "Given the importance of this issue," the committee said in a public statement, "we stressed the importance of Board oversight of the strategy as it is further developed and then implemented." Never before had a president of the bank received such a public reprimand.



When Wolfowitz returned to Washington, he seemed chastened. He soon flew to London to meet with Benn and his staff; to Paris, where he gave a speech on Africa; and to Strasbourg, where he spoke to members of the European Parliament. Meanwhile, the anti-corruption paper was sent to dozens of governments and hundreds of nongovernmental organizations for comment. By the end of January, most had responded. "The main message is that even most governments want us to be doing this work," Wolfowitz told me. "There really is widespread recognition that governance is one of the key elements of successful development."

Wolfowitz may be exaggerating the support he has garnered. "It is not the bank's role to be the world's policeman," Barbara Stocking, the director of Oxfam, the influential British advocacy group, told me. "The bank's role is poverty reduction. We all agree that when you've got a Mobutu-style government you can't put aid through it effectively. But most of the world isn't like that. It's much more nuanced."

Last month, Wolfowitz presented to the board a revised version of his anti-corruption paper, in which he made several concessions. While reserving for the bank's management the right to suspend projects where graft was suspected, the paper asserted that the bank should remain engaged in countries with serious corruption problems and should consider suspending lending to a particular country only in "exceptional" circumstances. "Don't make the poor pay twice," the paper said. Wolfowitz also agreed to consult more closely with the board, which unanimously approved the paper, and to seek its support before trying to suspend lending to individual countries. "I think that for his own survival he has had to make a deal," Roger Bate, of the American Enterprise Institute, said. "The shareholders of the bank are very powerful. His job is potentially at risk."

In a conversation with me, Wolfowitz called the new draft "a very, very good paper," but he also appeared to diminish the scope of his anti-corruption initiative. "I didn't think it was an initiative, to be honest with you," he said. "I'm still a bit surprised that something as obvious as that runs into resistance in some quarters." In fact, he continued, he had decided to pursue corruption only after being encouraged to do so by Africans on the bank's board and by some of its employees. "From my point of view, the most important thing was sending a message to the staff that, if many countries really wanted to address these issues, they would be backed up if they did that."

It is true that, beginning in the mid-nineties, some staffers urged the bank to confront corruption more aggressively. Daniel Kaufmann, a Chilean economist who is the director of global programs at the World Bank Institute, the bank's training arm, has for years argued that reducing corruption and improving governance are necessary to fight poverty. "I wouldn't exaggerate my influence," Kaufmann said when I spoke to him recently, adding that Wolfowitz "arrived at the bank, as Wolfensohn before him, already convinced that this was an extremely important issue in development."

Wolfowitz has a history of playing down controversial ideas that emerge under his imprimatur. In 1992, when he was Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, members of his staff drafted a paper called "Defense Planning Guidance," which promulgated a vision of the United States as the sole superpower, actively discouraging other nations from challenging its leadership. After the document was leaked, Wolfowitz claimed that he hadn't read it. In 1998, he signed a petition on the letterhead of the Project for the New American Century, a neoconservative think tank, urging President Clinton to pursue regime change in Iraq using "a full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts." And yet, in one of our talks, he objected to being publicly associated with the think tank, saying that in the late nineties he had disagreed with the group's call for a substantial increase in the size of the military. After September 11th, Wolfowitz sought to minimize the novelty of taking preëmptive military action against Iraq, arguing that the threat posed by Saddam and the collapse of U.N. sanctions left the United States and its allies little choice but to act.

After leaving the Selimiye Mosque, we were driven to a nearby restaurant, where Wolfowitz had dinner with mayors and governors from both sides of Turkey's border with Bulgaria, which is ten miles from Edirne. The dinner lasted several hours and featured half a dozen courses as well as numerous speeches, and by the time we boarded a Turkish military helicopter for the flight back to Istanbul it was almost ten o'clock. I sat next to Wolfowitz, who promptly nodded off. For about half an hour, we flew south without incident. It was a clear night, and the lights from remote farmhouses and hamlets were visible. Then we hit something—an air pocket, a hailstorm, it was impossible to tell. The helicopter shook violently and plunged down to the right. For a few moments, it seemed that the pilot had lost control. Looking out the window, I saw the ground rushing toward us. Mercifully, the aircraft levelled off.

Wolfowitz, who had been shaken awake, said nothing, and neither did any of the other passengers on board. Cold air was rushing in from somewhere, and Patrick English, the head of Wolfowitz's security detail, appeared from the front of the helicopter and said that the co-pilot's door had sheared off and fallen to the ground. We flew on, slower and lower than before. A few minutes later, English said that the pilot had offered to land at a nearby airstrip, where we could wait for another helicopter to pick us up. Wolfowitz said that he wanted to continue.

For about forty minutes, we sat in frozen silence. After we landed at Atatürk airport, Wolfowitz climbed into his waiting car, and when we got to the Hilton he went straight to his room. Some of the other passengers met for drinks at a lounge in the hotel. "I thought it had hit a bird and taken a bit of time to spit it out," Shigeo Katsu, the bank vice-president, said with a nervous laugh.

At the end of October, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Wolfowitz had pressed reluctant World Bank staffers to establish a permanent office in Baghdad. The article revealed that he was meeting regularly with wounded American soldiers in Washington, that he had dispatched Robin Cleveland on a fact-finding mission to Baghdad, and that he had replaced the bank's top official in the Middle East. The story confirmed what other sources had been saying to me: Wolfowitz was still deeply engaged with the war in Iraq.

"I can't start saying things that draw me into what is a major debate about Iraq policy," he said when I asked him whether he still thought that invading Iraq had been a good idea. "There's a lot in the record out there that I hope to correct some day, because I've been mischaracterized fairly often . . . but this isn't the time for me to do that." I reminded Wolfowitz that President Bush had recently conceded that errors had been made in the prosecution of the war. "I said that long before any other official in the U.S. Administration," Wolfowitz replied. "I got front-page headlines in the Washington *Post* when I said it. It was also an object lesson in how even the most sincere, well-intentioned comment can suddenly plunge you into a debate. I go back to my point here: it would be totally disorientating for this institution if my views became a subject of major discussion right now."

In the article, which appeared on July 24, 2003, Wolfowitz stated that U.S. officials had underestimated the problems they would face after deposing Saddam. But he has said little to suggest that he feels personally responsible for the misleading marketing of the war or its subsequent mishandling. Geoffrey Lamb, a former vice-president of the World Bank, said, "With McNamara, you knew from Day One, although he never said it, that his presidency of the bank was expiation. I don't think that's true of Paul. My strong guess is that he doesn't think he has anything to expiate."

A former Bush Administration official, deflecting the issue of Wolfowitz's culpability, cited mistakes made by other officials during the early stages of the American occupation. "Paul succeeded in making the argument inside the Administration that Saddam had to go," the former Administration official said to me. "He lost key arguments over implementation." After the invasion, Wolfowitz wanted to establish a new Iraqi government made up of prominent Iraqi exiles, including Ahmed Chalabi, the head of the Iraqi National Congress. When the White House ruled out this option, he changed tack, advocating local caucuses and regional elections, which he hoped would eventually result in the creation of a new central government. "The caucus was held in the south, and a meeting was planned for central Iraq, but Bremer killed it," the former Administration official said. "He saw it as a challenge to his authority." After Bremer arrived in Baghdad, Wolfowitz's influence in the Pentagon waned. An ambitious reconstruction program that he had helped plan failed to materialize; relations with his boss, Donald Rumsfeld, deteriorated; and by the end of 2004 many of his suggestions were being ignored.

Kenneth Adelman, a Republican foreign-policy expert and prominent neoconservative, says that Wolfowitz should have resigned in protest over the mismanagement of the war. "He cared deeply about Iraq," Adelman, who has known Wolfowitz since the mid-seventies, told me. "He was at the Pentagon getting briefings that, after the end of 2003 at the latest, were saying things are going terribly, terribly wrong. And he watches it and does nothing to turn it around." Even if Wolfowitz hadn't been willing to quit, Adelman went on, he should have made his views known to the President or to Vice-President Dick Cheney. "Dick really was very fond of Paul," Adelman said. "He could have gone to Dick and said, 'Look, I don't want to talk out of school, but listen. This is the President's No. 1 priority and it's all going to hell.'" Adelman told me that he still respects Wolfowitz but questions his motivations in

FIRST PASSION

Running   there I am   at fourteen
    I have been scolded
by my father for something I hadn't done
or hadn't not done   who knows   the dishes   nothing
    serious like my smoking
        or ineptness with people and bad
        choices

            It was *unjust*
and the almost irrelevant injustice grew so pure and tiny
    in its atmosphere of truth
            which rose like sky
that I fell in love with it and it cut into me

    loosening the first tears

        (though these were not what frightened me at night

Then the griefs came loose   beginning to run   I was
    fourteen and
        wailed around the blocks
                more times than once
    my chest   straining against the sobs
        in their delightful echoing
    back from the streets that suddenly were empty

        everyone having
        inched backward from the windows
            into the parts of rooms that are never chosen
        the side of the stairs   the door
            to the water heater
                    where they watched
    me amazed at this sourceless melodious grief
        eager to return to the normal dithering watchful
            golden gossip   of the afternoon

—*Mary Kinzie*

maintaining silence. "I wish there was another explanation than personal ambition," Adelman said. "He wanted to be a statesman and get a job like the World Bank presidency. He didn't get the job as a reward for keeping quiet, but he got it as a consequence of keeping quiet."

Kevin Kellems vigorously disputed the suggestion that Wolfowitz's nomination to the bank was a reward for his silence. "There was a vacancy," Kellems said. "He was asked if he was interested. He said yes. It's a step up from being Deputy Secretary of Defense and a great opportunity to make a difference. This had nothing to do with Iraq."

In building up the World Bank's presence in Iraq, Wolfowitz is hoping that it is not too late to improve the situation there. "The bank's role, I am happy to talk about," he said. "Actually, in a certain sense, it tells you that there is a lot to be worked with if security can be established. This is a country whose biggest problem is how to manage tens of millions of dollars of annual revenues. I wish most of our clients had that problem." I asked him how he could simultaneously argue that the bank should stop lending to corrupt countries and become more involved in Iraq, which now trails only Haiti in some rankings of the most corrupt countries on earth. "It's a problem to work on," Wolfowitz said. "I get inaccurately characterized on this governance issue as saying the bank should disengage. To the contrary, the basic point of the anti-corruption strategy is that we have to find ways to engage in countries with problems. In Iraq, there are certainly a lot of people who want to improve the system, who actually look to the World Bank as an ally in doing so."

In recent years, the bank has expanded its activities in other countries that have lately experienced war, such as Bosnia, Timor-Leste, and Liberia. In June, 2003, when Wolfowitz was still at the Pentagon, the bank joined the U.N. in an assessment of Iraq's reconstruction needs. With the help of donations from Britain, Japan, and the European Community, the bank established an Iraq Trust Fund, which, by the summer of 2004, was financing projects to repair schools damaged by the war, build new ones, and improve Baghdad's water supply. Various Iraqi ministries were supposed to carry out the work, with bank staffers supervising from Amman, Jordan. In November, 2005, the bank's board approved the first project in Iraq to be financed by the International Development Agency, the arm of the bank that lends to the poorest countries.

There are conflicting versions of what happened next. Wolfowitz says that before he arrived at the bank its Middle East and North Africa department had begun a plan to establish a permanent office in Baghdad. Several other people said that the idea originated in Wolfowitz's office, and that Chrik Poortman, the head of MENA, opposed it—in part for security reasons, and in part because he didn't think the plan would work. The bank had staffers in Baghdad until August, 2003, when one of them was killed by a bomb that destroyed the United Nations headquarters. The remaining staffers were evacuated, and a backup office was established in Amman. "Chrik was prepared to put people back in Baghdad, but he didn't think the performance of the bank projects would be enhanced by

"This is what he would have wanted—he was a total neat freak."

that move," a former MENA official told me. "The people would have been stuck in the Green Zone. He decided to work through Iraqis, and he had a team of them in Baghdad ready to go."

The dispute between Poortman and his superiors went beyond the question of whether to set up an office in Baghdad. "There was deep disappointment at the top about the fact that our projects in Iraq weren't making much progress," the former MENA official said. "Disbursements were low." Poortman, having worked as country director for the Balkans in the nineties, knew that governments established in the wake of a violent conflict rarely have the skills or the infrastructure to use large sums of money wisely, and Iraq was no exception. If the World Bank insisted on spending a great deal of money, much of it could end up being stolen or wasted. To avoid this outcome, Poortman concentrated on "capacity building": bringing Iraqis to Amman or Washington, and teaching them how to run big reconstruction projects.

Wolfowitz didn't think that this policy was effective. "It is easy to think of supervising contracts long distance, but when the real purpose is dialogue with policymakers it is hard to do that from long distance," he said to me. "It's much better to be in close and present." Last fall, Wolfowitz replaced Poortman with Daniela Gressani, an Italian economist who had worked on his transition team. (He offered Poortman a less senior post in central Asia, and Poortman resigned.) Gressani is now in the process of hiring a new country manager for Iraq and setting up an office in the Green Zone.

The decision to establish a World Bank office in Baghdad seemed to confirm the fears of Wolfowitz's critics about his intentions. "Paul couldn't do nation-building in the Pentagon, because Rumsfeld and the military didn't want anything to do with it," Dennis de Tray told me. "He saw the World Bank as another way to make it happen. It lends money; it's got people on the ground in the region; it knows the terrain. I really think that was one of the attractions of the job to him."

I had heard a rumor, which I relayed to Wolfowitz, that he had been talking to Ambassador Khalilzad and to General David Petraeus, the new Coalition military commander in Iraq. "I don't remember talking to Khalilzad for a long time, and it was about someone he was recommending for a personnel job in the World Bank," Wolfowitz said. "I talked to the U.S. authorities, especially the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and the State Department people, about the reconstruction effort. I got one request from Petraeus, looking at whether we could free up some existing money for job programs in Iraq. It's a reasonable thing. I'm happy to look at it, but that's kind of the extent of it." Wolfowitz went on, "I don't want to minimize it. As I've said, we have no control over the security situation—obviously, we in the bank—but, to the extent that security can be established, the economic role is hugely important. The more people see that they have a stake in peace, the more we will have peace."

When Robert McNamara arrived at the World Bank, one of the first things he did was to draft a five-year plan, which aimed at doubling lending. When the five years were over, in 1973, he produced another five-year plan, focussed on rural development. Current and former bank staffers say that Wolfowitz has been averse to making decisions, slow at filling vacancies, and unwilling or unable to lay out a strategy for the bank, beyond battling corruption. A few months after he took over, officials in the bank's finance and planning departments presented Wolfowitz with several proposals for shifting resources to Africa from other parts of the world. "There were three options: one marginal, one moderate, and one radical," a former bank staffer recalled. "The radical option said, 'Cut the budget significantly from other parts of the bank, such as Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and move all the money to Africa.' He looked up and said, 'That sounds good.' But nothing ever happened. He didn't make a decision." (According to the Government Accountability Project, a Washington watchdog group, the World Bank's lending to Africa in the first three quarters of fiscal year 2007, which began last July, has fallen by a billion dollars compared with the same period in the 2006 fiscal year.)

Some important positions at the

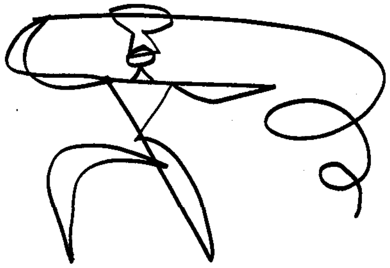
World Bank have been empty for months. The East Asia and Pacific department, which includes three of the bank's biggest borrowers—China, Indonesia, and Vietnam—lacked a vice-president for more than a year. The Africa department didn't have one for three months. "I get a lot of calls from people in the bank looking for jobs," a veteran development expert said to me recently. "They are disillusioned with Paul. They think there is no other shoe to drop. There isn't going to be a moment when his vision becomes clear and he defines where he wants to take the bank. It just isn't there. It's nothing to do with his record in Iraq, with being a neocon, all that stuff. It has to do with being an executive and a leader. I say this with great regret. I wanted him to succeed, and I still want him to succeed. McNamara had a lot of baggage, but he carried it with him to the bank and did great things."

The chances are that Wolfowitz will remain in office until 2010, when, if the Democrats win the White House, he will almost certainly be replaced. After more than thirty years in Washington, he is used to political power struggles and institutional infighting. Since the mid-seventies, when he was part of Team B, he has been challenging entrenched bureaucracies. "I don't want to be flip here," he said not long ago, sitting at a table in his wood-panelled office on the twelfth floor of the World Bank's headquarters. "But if no one was complaining, then nothing would be happening."

Wolfowitz's allies point out that James Wolfensohn also generated controversy during his first years at the bank, but by the time he left he was generally recognized as having been a good president. "Bureaucracies are not easy to change; those of us who have worked in them know that," Karl Jackson said. "If you had interviewed people at this stage in Jim Wolfensohn's tenure, you would have concluded he was the Devil incarnate." In recent months, Wolfowitz has filled some of the vacancies created by resignations, and most of his hires have been foreigners. "I've brought in a Swedish executive vice-president of the I.F.C., an Italian chief financial officer, a Salvadoran managing director, a New Zealander managing director, a Spanish general counsel," he said. "I've got a woman from Ghana who's my chief of staff, and the deputy is a man from Ivory Coast. Most recently, I've brought in a vice-president for human development who is a woman from Botswana, and I will shortly have a Jordanian man as vice-president for external affairs. Best I can tell, none of those people are American." (Critics inside the bank point out that Cleveland, Folsom, Kellems, and Jackson remain in place, and that many of Wolfowitz's appointments are people from countries that have actively or tacitly supported the Iraq war.)

A couple of weeks ago, Wolfowitz pushed through an internal reorganization, aimed at enabling the World Bank to send money more rapidly to disaster areas. He insisted that he was enjoying himself at the bank, and said he was optimistic that he would get the financial commitments necessary to secure its future. "I think one of the most important points to get across to all the donors is that even though there is a lot you can do bilaterally, a great deal of that depends on having a system in place that requires multilateral funding," he said. "I certainly wouldn't be here if I didn't believe in the importance of multilateral institutions."

The morning after Wolfowitz's visit to the Selimiye Mosque, his bare toes featured prominently in the Turkish newspapers. "PRESIDENT WITH A HOLE IN THE SOCKS," the headline in *Sabah* said. "THE BOSS OF MONEY HAS A HOLE IN HIS SOCK," *Posta* declared. None of the papers reported the aerial emergency, but it was on Wolfowitz's mind. "I'm wondering if we should be flying at all in those sorts of conditions," he said. "Helicopters are tricky. They're not supposed to fly at all." After having breakfast with representatives of several local nongovernmental organizations, he visited a paper-recycling depot on the outskirts of Istanbul, another client of the I.F.C. Then he went to the airport, where he thanked the bank's local staff for making his trip a success, saying, "I think we got five days of visits into a day and a half." Somebody brought up the threadbare socks, and Wolfowitz smiled. "It's a good joke," he said. "I'm glad I went to the mosque."

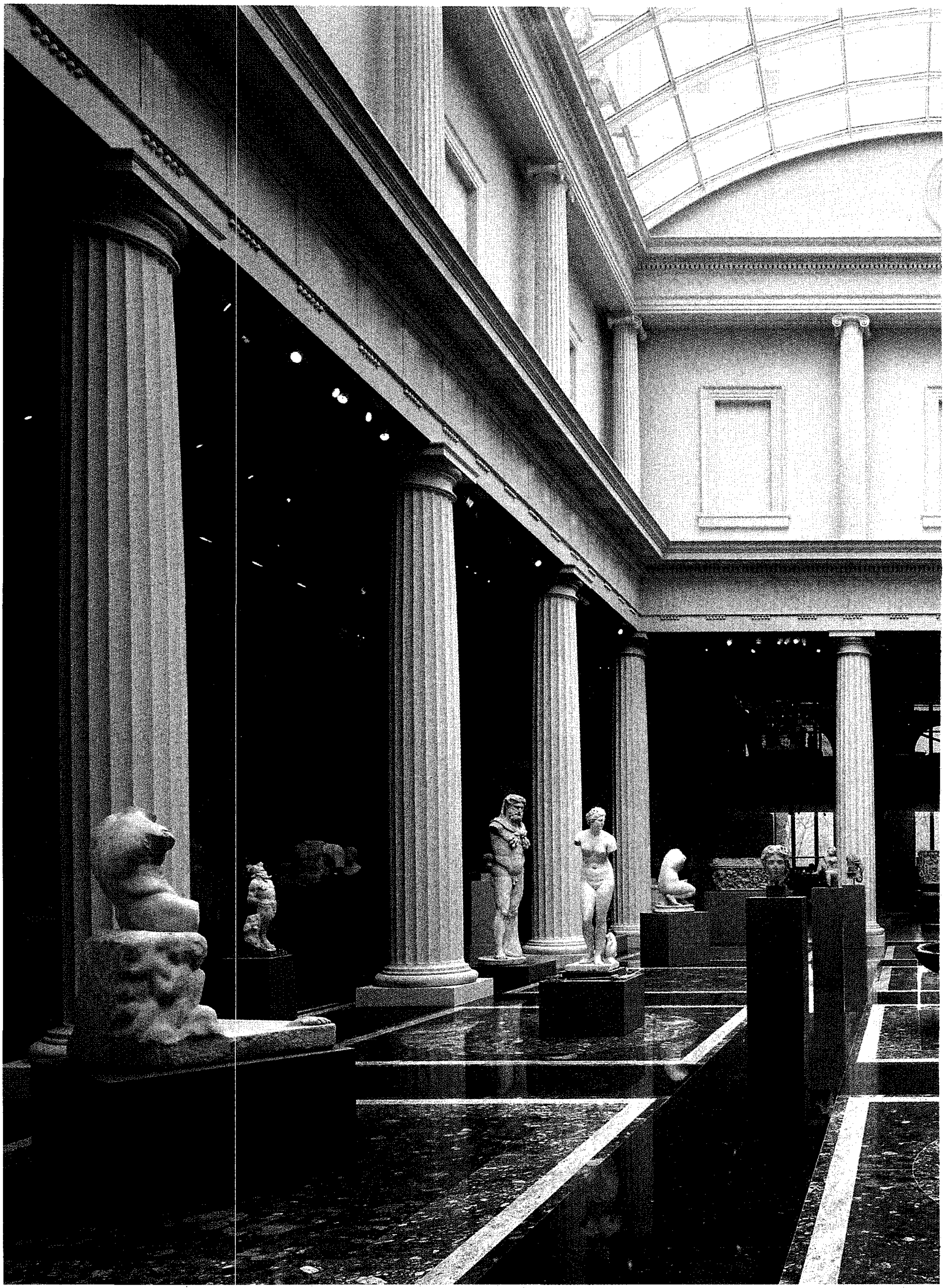


Before returning to Washington, Wolfowitz met for an interview with Mehmet Ali Birand, a nightly news anchor on Turkish television. "He saved me once," Birand told me as he sat on a makeshift set at the terminal, preparing his questions. "The Turkish military wanted my head, and he intervened."

In 1998, Wolfowitz, then at Johns Hopkins, was visiting Istanbul for a conference organized by the American Enterprise Institute. Birand had written columns calling for better treatment of Turkey's Kurds, and his employer, *Sabah*, had been forced by senior members of the military to lay him off. Wolfowitz, informed of Birand's plight, met with him in Istanbul. "Paul's intervention was crucial," Birand recalled. "General Bir, the No. 2 guy in the military, was an old friend of his. He talked to him and said, 'Look, you can't do this.'"

Birand got a new job, and he and Wolfowitz stayed in touch. I asked Birand how the war in Iraq had affected Turkish views of Wolfowitz. "Now people think he is doing a good job for the poor at the World Bank," Birand replied. "It is like Robin Hood: stealing from the rich to give to the poor. If he had stayed at the Pentagon, it would have been different. At first, public opinion was in favor of the war. But, when the Americans fucked up, that changed. Now the Turks are furious—with themselves as well. They think, How could we do this?"

Wolfowitz walked onto the set and greeted Birand warmly. Most of Birand's questions were about Turkey's economic situation, but toward the end of the interview he asked, "How do you see Iraq? Disintegrated, or getting better?" Wolfowitz parried. "I don't have a crystal ball," he replied. "I do know what's best for the Iraqi people, and that's a peaceful, stable, unified country, and I know that's the Turkish view as well." Birand said that many Turks were frightened by what was happening in Iraq. "There have been a lot of frightening things in Iraq over the last thirty years," Wolfowitz said. "It will calm down?" Birand asked. "I hope so," Wolfowitz said. ♦

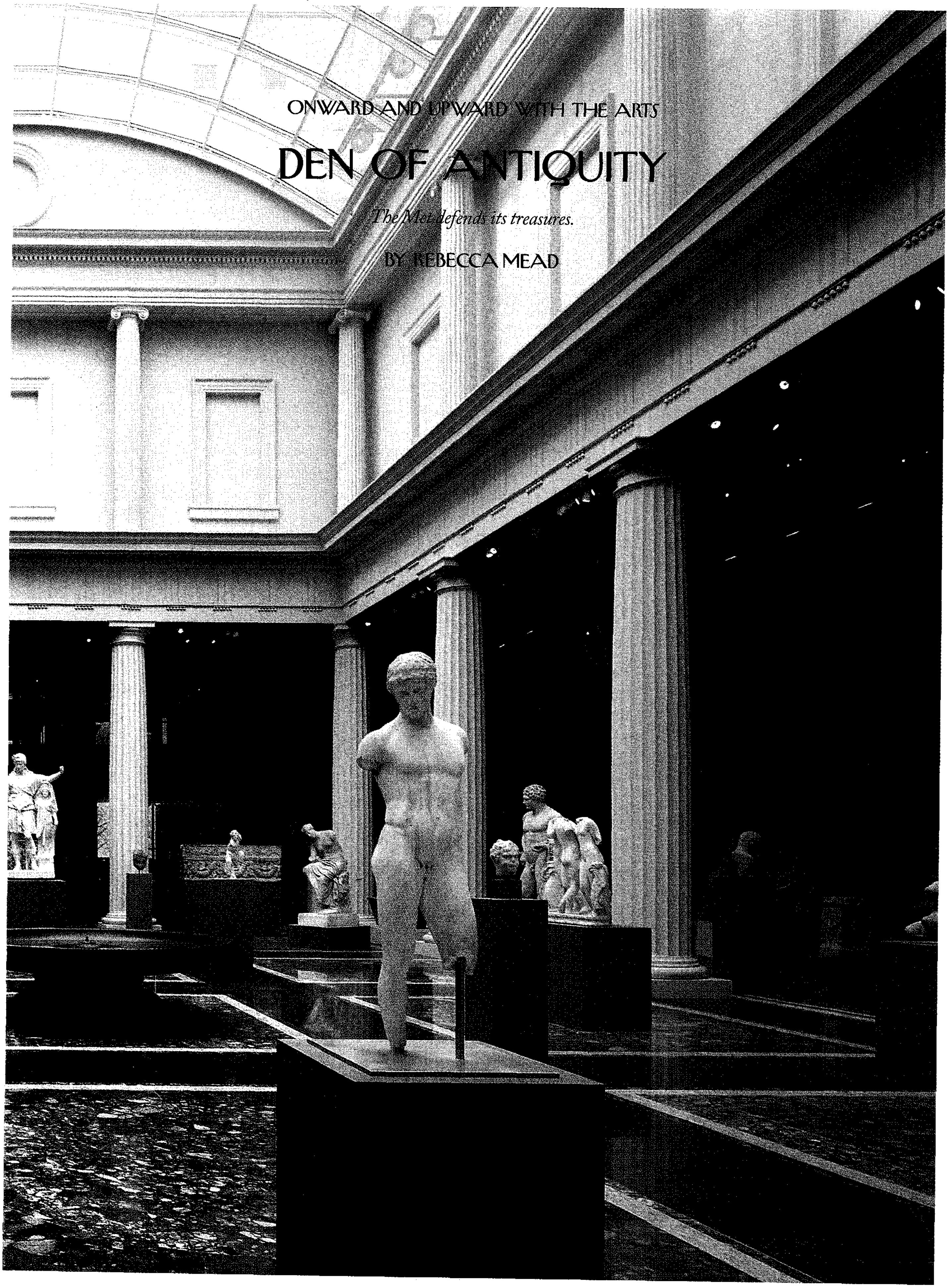


ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

DEN OF ANTIQUITY

The Met defends its treasures.

BY REBECCA MEAD



In 1989, Carlos Picón, who is the curator of the Greek and Roman department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, got a telephone call from Richard Keresey, the head of the antiquities department at Sotheby's: A curious sculpture was about to come on the market. It was almost seven feet tall and depicted a feminine but muscular figure, with a striking, noseless face, standing in a relaxed posture and dressed in an abbreviated tunic and lace-up sandals. Oddly tucked under the figure's armpit, as if the statue were leaning on it, was a smaller female figure, swathed in robes and standing stiffly upright, like a self-conscious guest at a toga party. Keresey told Picón that the sculpture was being sold by a society family in Palm Beach, Florida, who had displayed it next to their swimming pool, under a canvas awning. The family thought it was a statue of Artemis, but Keresey and Picón immediately made a different identification.

"The sellers called it an Artemis because the figure has something like breasts, but I said, 'No, that is the Hope Dionysos, and it has been lost since 1917,' " Picón explained the other day, in his office at the Met. "I said it was a famous statue in antiquity." Only a year earlier, Picón had written an article for an academic journal in which he lamented the disappearance of the statue. The last known purchaser had been Francis Howard, a great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin, who had bought the Dionysos at Christie's in London, in 1917, when it was auctioned off as part of the famed Hope Collection. (In the late eighteenth century, Thomas Hope became an enthusiastic collector in the newly fashionable field of antiquities, purchasing recently excavated Greek vases in bulk, and filling his homes in England with ancient statuary shipped from Rome.)

Picón joined the Met in 1990, after spending four years as the curator of Western antiquities at the San Antonio Museum of Art, and the Hope Dionysos was his first acquisition. Later this month, the sculpture will be on view at the center of the Met's new Leon Levy and Shelby White Court—a grand two-story atrium that is modelled on Imperial Roman architecture and is paved with red and green marble, in a pattern that alludes to the Pantheon. (The space used to be a cafeteria.) "It is appropriate that the statue is something that used to be so famous and was completely neglected, that went out of taste and fashion," Picón said of his new centerpiece. "And it is also a great fact that it is not a statue of the Furies, of something lethal and deadly—that it is beneficial and kind."

The auspicious demeanor and distinguished provenance of the Hope Dionysos would offer aesthetic and historical satisfactions at any time, but they are particularly welcome at this moment. The renovation of the Met's Greek and Roman galleries—a fifteen-year project—has been completed at a controversial time in the world of antiquities. In the past decade, a number of high-profile court cases have centered on the illegal excavation and exportation of ancient archeological finds. Two years ago, Giacomo Medici, an international dealer whose wares made their way into private and public collections, was convicted in Italy of trafficking in antiquities dug up by *tombaroli,* or tomb raiders. (Medici is appealing the conviction.) In 2002, a New York jury convicted Frederick Schultz, a prominent dealer, with conspiring to receive stolen Egyptian antiquities. Five years earlier, one of Schultz's associates, a British dealer named Jonathan Tokeley, had been convicted of handling stolen objects; he had smuggled antiquities by coating them in plastic and painting them to look like garish tourist trinkets. (He was sentenced to six years in prison, after attempting suicide by swallowing hemlock.) Marion True, formerly the curator of antiquities at the J. Paul Getty Museum, in Los Angeles, is currently being tried in Italy for handling illegally excavated antiquities, along with Robert Hecht, an antiquities dealer now in his late eighties. (Both deny any wrongdoing.)

Meanwhile, Italian and Greek authorities have successfully applied moral suasion to American institutions. Last fall, the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston, sent thirteen objects back to Italy, including a statue of Hadrian's wife, Sabina. (According to the Italian police, photographs of the dirt-encrusted statue were found in a raid on Medici's warehouse, in Geneva.) The Met, too, has been obliged to reëxamine its holdings, and last year agreed to return twenty-one items, including one of the museum's most prized possessions: a krater—a vaselike object used for mixing wine and water—depicting the death of Sarpedon, painted by the Greek artist Euphronios. Thomas Hoving, the former director of the Met, bought the krater in 1972, for an unheard-of million dollars; in his 1993 memoir, "Making the Mummies Dance," he called it "the single most perfect work of art I had ever encountered." Suspicion was cast upon the provenance of the Euphronios krater almost as soon as its purchase was announced. (Hoving jokingly, if presciently, dubbed it the "hot pot.") Italian authorities claim that Medici supplied the krater to the Met, via Hecht, and that it was illegally excavated; however, under the terms of the agreement, the Met is giving up the krater without acknowledging any wrongdoing. ("The guy who sold it to us faked us out," Hoving told me. "It is kind of a nice object. Leonardo would have loved to own it.") The Italians have permitted the Met custody of the vase until 2008; it is currently on display in a section of the Greek and Roman galleries that opened eight years ago.

The legal basis for these arrests and negotiations is a 1970 UNESCO convention in which the participating countries agreed to coöperate in efforts to curtail illicit traffic in antiquities. The United States adopted the provisions of the accord in 1983; the discovery of Medici's warehouse, in 1995, provided the Italian government with the evidence it needed to make a case on a grand scale. As a result of the Italian and Greek repatriation campaigns, museums around the world have been reconsidering their own acquisition standards: last fall, the Getty said that it would buy no undocumented antiquities that have surfaced since 1970. Underlying all the complex regulations and evolving standards, though, are broader philosophical questions: Who has the better claim to ownership of cultural treasures—the countries in which they were produced or found, or the international museums in which they have ended up? And who should determine how those cultural treasures are displayed—the art historians, for whom a

The Leon Levy and Shelby White Court in the Met's renovated Greek and Roman galleries. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

Greek vase is an expression of the taste of the ancients, or the archeologists, for whom any vase, sublime or mundane, is an artifact that helps illuminate how an ancient Greek or Roman actually lived?

The Met made a public-relations virtue of legal necessity over the return of the Euphronios krater: in its 2006 annual report, an introductory letter signed by Philippe de Montebello, the Met's director, speaks of the "leadership position" the museum had taken in crafting an agreement with Italy, as if the relinquishing of the vase were a triumph rather than a much resisted capitulation. Picón is less diplomatic. "In the nineteenth century, it was called treasure hunting—you would go to foreign lands far and wide and you would gather what was going to be destroyed and bring it back to a safe place in the Age of Enlightenment," he told me one day as he strode around the new sculpture court. The spectacular statues were carefully positioned and lit by sunshine streaming in from the enormous skylight two high stories overhead; the blocky gray basalt plinths—imported at considerable expense from Orvieto—and the creamy walls were as inconspicuously luxurious as the fixtures of a Giorgio Armani boutique. "Treasure hunting used to be thought of as something very worthy," Picón went on. "Now someone goes into his back yard and excavates a coin and it is called 'looting' and 'rape,' and all this. Well, I need say no more."

Picón, who is fifty-two, comes from San Juan, Puerto Rico; his father was in real estate and his grandfather a celebrated poet. (Of his home country, he said, "Lovely beaches, wonderful rain forest, and great Colonial architecture, but no Greek or Roman.") He has dark-brown hair, a quizzical smile, and a manner that shifts from intimacy to imperiousness in the deliberate blink of an eye. "The archeologists in Greece and Turkey—those who are worldly and responsible—are going to say, 'Where are we going to put all this stuff that is coming from America?' " he continued. "They have no storage. They have no galleries. The things they took from Boston were shown in Italy for one week—where are they now? In some basement, crumbling away?" The surrender of the Euphronios krater—which Picón first saw two years after its purchase, while he was working as a summer intern at the Met—was, he said, "very sad. Because it had been here for thirty-five years, and it is very beautiful."

Picón told me that the Italian authorities and the American archeologists who have supported them—including the leadership of the Archaeological Institute of America—are misguided in supposing that pursuing collectors and museums will halt the illegal excavation of antiquities. "This claim that collecting encourages people to dig? People have always dug at home," he said. "Treasure hunting is part of man's instinct. You don't know what treasures are down there, and you are curious, and if you are lucky you are going to hit something you can sell. People say you shouldn't collect, but that, too, is part of human instinct. You collect rocks when you are a child; you collect coins. But this deadly dull group of archeologists think that they are the only people who should have any say over the ancient world." Archeologists, Picón told me, are jealous of the tomb robbers: "They go on an excavation and find nothing; but an uneducated person, because they have the instinct of a Gypsy, they find a tomb. These *tombaroli* know where to go and dig!" In any case, he claimed, most unprovenanced antiquities were chance finds, stumbled across by a farmer in a field or a construction worker building a road. "In America, you hit a stone and it's going to be a boulder," he said. "In Italy or Turkey, you hit a stone and chances are it's going to be a chunk of something that was destroyed by the early Christians."

Picón reminded me that, despite the skepticism of many archeologists, most acquisitions of antiquities are perfectly legal. "Last year, I bought a sensational urn with snake handles that goes back to a very old European collection," he said. "Nobody, not even the most demented archeologist, can criticize me for doing this. It is absolutely as legal as buying a condominium. Ninety-nine-point-nine-nine-nine per cent of what we have bought in the last generation has been absolutely and straightforwardly documented. Museums had better continue collecting. The rules change, or evolve, like everything else. In dog breeding, the rules change, too. Not that I am comparing dog breeding to curatorship."

As Picón led me into the museum's new "study collection"—which is on a mezzanine above the court and contains more than four thousand items insufficiently extraordinary for the main galleries—he paused in front of a cabinet containing fragments of ancient colored glass, coin-size shards that were arrayed in rows, like butterflies pinned to velvet. "People of knowledge and taste in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries used to collect these things," he said. "You would buy them in Rome or Beirut or Is-

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"Thursday is out. I have jury duty."

tanbul—actually, you can still buy them in the bazaar in Istanbul, though it is not supposed to happen. I thought, Let's have a case of this sensational glass, because it is a feast to the eyes. I am sorry, but that is not Turkish patrimony, or Italian patrimony. Here am I, a Puerto Rican of French, Spanish, and Italian descent—this is as much my culture as somebody who was born in Florence. Actually, it's more mine, because I have taken my time to study it."

The Met's first curator of Greek and Roman art was Edward Robinson, a classical archeologist and the former director of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. Robinson worked in concert with John Marshall, an Englishman who, until his death, in 1928, served as the museum's agent in the European marketplace, buying with a free rein—without the need to consult either curators or trustees—and shipping his purchases back to New York in bulk. Among the most spectacular were frescoes excavated in 1900 from Boscoreale, Italy, including those from a bedroom that had been painted with architectural and trompe-l'œil pastoral scenes. One wall was found complete with a small metal window grate, which had been warped and melted by the heat of Mt. Vesuvius's eruption. In the Met's refurbished galleries, the window is dramatically backlit, reminding the visitor of the fate of the house's inhabitants.

Robinson's successor as curator was Gisela Richter, who oversaw the opening, in 1926, of the Met's original Roman sculpture court, which was modelled after a Pompeiian villa and featured gravel walkways and cypress trees. In 1959, the curatorship was turned over to Dietrich von Bothmer, a descendant of Hanoverian aristocracy and an expert in Greek vases. Bothmer's department had been marginalized by the museum's director at mid-century, Francis Henry Taylor, a medievalist who disliked ancient art. Taylor's signature act in respect to antiquities was to hire Dorothy Draper, the interior designer, to transform the sculpture court into a swanky restaurant.

Von Bothmer, who retired from the role of department head in 1990 but remains a curator, had a didactic bent. Cornelius Vermeule, a retired curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, says of him, "If he had ten pots of the same shape and the same period, he would show all ten of them lined up." Philippe de Montebello, who has run the Met since 1977, says, "Dietrich von Bothmer, in large part because of his despondency and frustration over lack of space, never tried to do a complete rethinking, and there is something deadening about trying to fix something *à moitié*. Everything was shown in an old-fashioned way, and that is, from a visual point of view, rather boring. You walk into a gallery that is exclusively filled with Greek vases and you want to run away."

To revivify the collection—much of

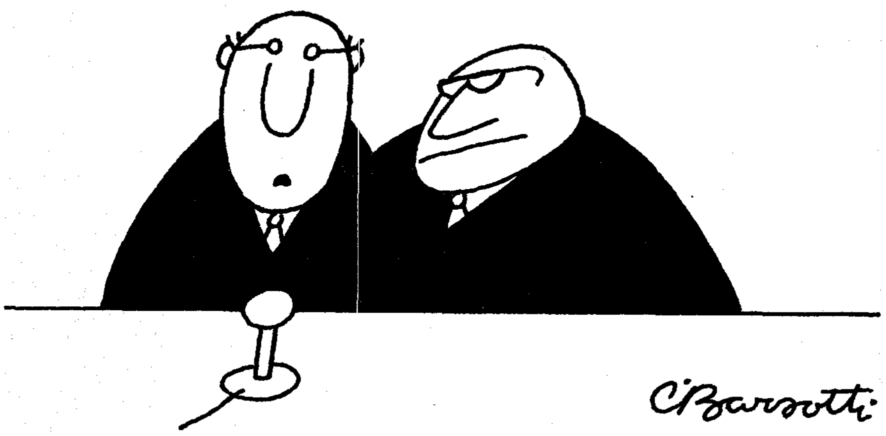
The centerpiece of the Met's Etruscan collection is a bronze chariot from the sixth century B.C. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

which had been banished to the museum's basement—de Montebello turned to Picón, who, before becoming a curator in San Antonio, received a doctorate in classical archeology from Oxford University; his undergraduate studies were at Haverford and Bryn Mawr. "I called John Boardman, the grand old man of classical studies at Oxford, and said, 'Do you remember Carlos Picón?' " de Montebello recalls. "He said, 'Of course. He is the most brilliant student I have had in the last twenty years.' "

It was not Picón's intellectual gifts alone that attracted de Montebello. In San Antonio, Picón had created a Greek and Roman department from scratch, with the help of Gilbert Denman, a wealthy collector and local grandee. Picón learned to shoot, in order to participate in weekend house parties dedicated to boar-hunting, a pastime that is to Texas billionaires what golf is to those in the Northeast. He also learned to drive, a skill he had avoided acquiring in Oxford, where he favored a bicycle. "Gilbert Denman provided him with a car to learn to drive on—an old Nash that had been deaccessioned from San Antonio's transportation museum," recalls James Godfrey, a consultant in Chinese art who, at the time, was a fellow-curator. "Carlos was very indignant when he was challenged by the local police—I think he was stopped for driving erratically. He turned with all of his candor to the young police officer and said, 'I thought I was doing rather well.' "

In New York, Picón's fund-raising accomplishments have been substantial—a necessity given that the renovation of the Met's southern wing has cost more than two hundred million dollars. "There is an élan in the air which did not exist before," Michael Steinhardt, the hedge-fund founder turned philanthropist, says; one of the galleries of Greek art has been named the Judy and Michael H. Steinhardt Gallery. (Steinhardt also contributed fifty thousand dollars toward the purchase of the Hope Dionysos, a sum so negligible that he doesn't remember parting with it. Picón got the statue for two hundred and twenty thousand dollars.) Picón counts many of the museum's benefactors among his friends, including Renée Belfer, who underwrote the first phase of Greek and Roman gallery renovations, and Michael and Mary Jaharis, whose names grace a neoclassical hall filled with Greek statuary. Two years ago, the Jaharises threw Picón a fiftieth-birthday party; according to Robert Guy, a scholar of Greek vases, who is one of Picón's oldest friends, the party was part of a weekend-long celebration, "like Carnaval in Rio. Martha Stewart was there, and it was the week before she was going into the clink." Picón, who is an excellent cook, met Stewart when he served as a high-end tour guide aboard a Mediterranean cruise ship chartered by two friends—Thomas Dittmer, a co-founder of Refco, the financial-services firm, and his wife, Frances—who were celebrating

Carlos Picón is defiant about the role of museums: "Some archeologists only care about the dirt." Photograph by Michele Asselin.



"On the advice of counsel, Senator, I'd like to sing 'The Star-Spangled Banner.'"

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their thirtieth wedding anniversary. (The company has since collapsed and the marriage ended.) "The first person to show up for every tour in Turkey and Greece was Martha," Picón recalled. "She was the most eager student of all, and we became great friends." Cornelius Vermeule says, "Carlos went and visited Martha in Maine, and he sent me a picture of himself cooking with her. He said, with some humor, that he wanted me to know that some people of Puerto Rican origin ate something more than Tostitos." Another friend was Bill Blass, the fashion designer—also a connoisseur of antiquities—whom Picón started advising on his purchases in the late eighties. "He once told me, 'Don't let me buy anything you wouldn't like for your institution,' " Picón said. Blass, who died in 2002, left twenty-six million dollars to the Met—half his estate—as well as several important art works, including a pair of Imperial Roman statues of half-draped young men in heroic poses, armless and headless but still with impressively defined torsos.

"If you're an academic and you don't like people, and you'd rather do your own research and be in a cubicle and grow old very grumpily, writing great books and indexing them, then you really shouldn't be in a job which has a significant aspect that is client development," Picón said. Collectors of antiquities, he added, tend to be unusual people. "A lot of people are very afraid of this field, in terms of collecting, because it is anonymous. The first thing that people say to me about an antiquity is 'How can you tell that it's old? Is there a test?' I say there is no test for marble. Here is a good, honest businessman who is used to getting an answer—you don't invest in copper futures without knowing you are getting copper. There are some people who don't always trust their own taste, or who feel they would like to have something that is objective. That is why people who collect antiquities are more—not adventurous, but they are more like artists in a way, because they don't require the firm proof that this is in the catalogue raisonné of Joan Miró. People ask, 'How do I know it's not a forgery?' I say, 'You can't prove it, but trust your eye, trust your dealer, trust your scholars, trust your museum.' It takes a certain amount of gravitas and a certain amount of confidence for somebody to go into a field like this, and that is why there are so few collectors. People want to be able to say, 'That is my Rauschenberg, and that is my early Warhol, and that is my latest Jeff Koons,' not 'That is my sculpture by an anonymous Roman.' "

The ancient Romans were the first collectors of art, and saw no contradiction between holding a culture in high esteem—as they did the Greeks—and plundering its treasures for purposes of interior decoration. In medieval times, Greek and Roman art was sequestered in monasteries; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ancient marbles, bronzes, coins, and gems were sought after by Popes and by other prominent Italians, including Lorenzo de' Medici. By the eighteenth century, a busy trade of restorer-dealers could be found in Rome, refinishing sculptures to decorate the grand homes of European nobles and merchants, and the opening of tombs had become a gentlemanly pursuit. An engraving of the time shows William Hamilton, one of the era's greatest gatherers of ancient treasures, observing a group of Italian peasants lifting a tomb's lid; his wife, in an enormous hat, stands by, as if they were at a picnic.

Archeological critics of antiquities collectors see the practice in a much grimmer light. They argue that, as long as historically rich artifacts are treated as exquisite art works that can be placed in a vitrine, looting will continue; in their view, collectors or institutions who profess surprise that some of their purchases have illegal origins are willfully ignorant. James Wright, the chair of classical and Near Eastern archeology at Bryn Mawr, says of museum curators, "They preferred to cast a blind eye. They didn't think about it because they were so desirous of having those things." In 2000, David Gill, a professor of ancient history at Swansea University, in Wales, and Christopher Chippindale, of Cambridge University, tabulated the provenance of the contents of several published collections, including that of the San Antonio Museum. They calculated that ninety-nine per cent of the Greek vases in the San Antonio Museum's collection had no definitive "find-spots," or exact locations in which they were known to have been dug up. Picón's suggestion that many antiquities are chance finds of a farmer and a plow rather than the product of concerted illegal excavation is, archeologists say, a convenient fiction. Elizabeth Stone, a professor of anthropology at Stony Brook University, who has been a vocal critic of antiquities trafficking, says, "What happens with the illegal antiquities trade is no different from the illegal drug trade, except that the people who are receiving the stuff are not at the bottom of society; they are at the top. If collecting antiquities gets the kind of reputation that wearing fur coats has, then it stops."

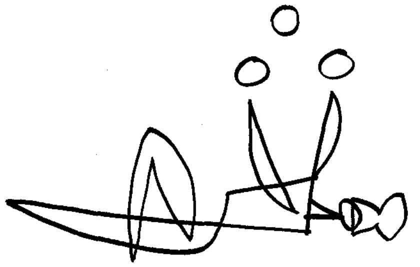
Picón scoffs at such talk. Speaking of Gill and Chippindale's report, he told me, "Making a graph of what may or may not be published is not scholarship; it is a pastime. It is like counting beans." The suggestion that looted objects dominate the marketplace, he said, betrays an ignorance of history. "Some of our colleagues in the archeological world have no idea that collecting has been going on for two thousand five hundred years, since ancient times," he said. "There are a limitless number of objects, in every corner of the universe. I don't know what Mr. Giacomo Medici may or may not have supplied, but he is not the source of all the antiquities in the universe. The market is more than Mr. Medici—with all respect to Mr. Medici."

Picón told me that he never bought anything from Medici and knew him only glancingly, though Medici did make a gift of two vase fragments to the San Antonio Museum during Picón's tenure. Medici, he recalled, had bought the fragments at auction for about twenty-five hundred dollars. "It was the Comtesse de Béhague collection, in Monaco, 1987," Picón told me. "Never again will there be an auction like this—everything from Saint-Porchaire ceramics to medieval ivories. Such taste! I saw Medici at the end of the auction. A friend of mine was with me and said, 'You bought that fragment that Carlos wanted for San Antonio,' and he said, 'I will give it to him.' I thought it was rather touching. He put it in my hands and said, 'Give it to your museum.' He had never been to Texas. He had never seen my museum." Upon hearing Stone's suggestion that the collecting of antiquities will eventually earn the same degree of opprobrium that the wearing of fur has acquired in some quarters, Picón lifted a derisive brow. "I don't have a fur coat, but I would like to have one," he said.

One of the private collections that has come under the most scrutiny is that of the late Leon Levy, who was a partner at Oppenheimer & Company, the investment firm, and his wife, Shelby White. The collection was displayed at the Met in 1990—shortly after Picón was hired—in an exhibition titled "Glories of the Past." Levy, who died in 2003, and White, a sometime financial journalist and the author of a 1992 book, "What Every Woman Should Know About Her Husband's Money," had developed an interest in antiquities in the nineteen-seventies. The investor Robert Rosenkranz, a protégé of Levy's at Oppenheimer, recalls being summoned to Levy's office to view his first purchase, a Greek vase: "He talked about how cheap it was, and how old it was." The Levy-White apartment in Manhattan was filled with museum-quality pieces: the front door opened onto a hallway lined with Roman busts—emperors on one side and now anonymous notables on the other. A bronze sculpture from the first century B.C. of a well-muscled man, approximately one and a half times life size, stood in the living room. In the Levy-White household, it was familiarly referred to as Harry. (The statue acquired the nickname while on loan to the San Antonio Museum, in the late eighties, because of a resemblance to one of the museum's young patrons. Harry is currently on loan to the Met, where he stands near the entrance to the Leon Levy and Shelby White Court.)

Picón got to know Levy and White while he was a student in England, where they would stop off to visit on their way to the Continent or to archeological excavations that they funded in Ashkelon, Israel. Picón recalled Levy's fascination with ancient emperors and generals, whose histories he read avidly: "He kind of liked them. He felt like he would like to be as good as them. Levy was very absent-minded—he would say to his driver, 'George, is this our car?' and he would forget that Shelby was with him at a dinner and walk out—but he wouldn't forget anything to do with a historical fact or a work of art." In 1995, the couple contributed twenty million dollars to the Met, a gift that the museum's president, Emily Rafferty, says was crucial in enabling the museum to undertake the renovation of the sculpture court.

A partial catalogue of the Levy-White collection was published for the "Glories of the Past" show. As a result, the couple's collecting has been examined particularly closely by the archeological lobby; Gill and Chippindale calculate that no findspot was given for ninety-three per cent of the objects in the catalogue. An amphora returned to Italy by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts had been a gift from the couple. And other institutions have questioned the propriety of accepting their largesse—Bryn Mawr, where Picón studied, has for a decade had a policy discouraging the acceptance of donations from the Leon Levy Foundation. Last year, Randall White, a professor of anthropology at N.Y.U., resigned from the university's Center for Ancient Studies when it was announced that the foundation was giving two hundred million dollars for the creation of a graduate institute devoted to the ancient world. (The institute is to be modelled, in part, on the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, where Levy was a trustee; it will be based in a town house across from the Met.) White's collection has also been targeted by the Italian authorities, and she is negotiating with them over the return of several items.



At the Met, where White is one of thirty-eight elected trustees—and where donors supply the resources that in European institutions would be provided by the government—the Levys' generosity has been courted. Levy, in his 2002 memoir, "The Mind of Wall Street," recalled when Philippe de Montebello, paying a call to Levy's home in search of funding, promised that the sculpture court would be named for him "in perpetuity." (Levy asked how long in perpetuity was. Fifty years, de Montebello replied. Levy bargained him up to seventy-five.) Picón told me that White—whose name has just been affixed to a wall of the sculpture court—has been unfairly attacked. "Poor Shelby White," he said. "There are hundreds of antiquities collectors worldwide, but they pick on her only because she is generous. They are so unworldly and so uninformed that they think that attacking Shelby and making graphs of her acquisitions, which she has generously shared with the public, is going to change the field. They are very naïve."

I recently met with White at the Park Avenue headquarters of the Leon Levy Foundation. We sat in a small office with an undistinguished view which was filled with books and antiquities: some Roman busts, a Greek vase, a fragment of a Roman mosaic on the wall. She wore a trim tweed pants suit and gold jewelry. White, who was born in 1938 in Flatbush, is the daughter of a businessman in the garment trade; she attended Mount Holyoke and Columbia University. "For us, collecting was much more of an intellectual pursuit," she told me. "Our interest was in learning as much as we could about ancient cultures." She and Levy went to Ashkelon every year: "Leon would walk around the site, talking about the history. I loved being in some tiny little pit digging with dental tools." She was thrilled when, one year, a coin bearing the image of Cleopatra, one of her heroines, was found on the site. "I don't have the Cleopatra coin—it's in the Israel museum," she said. "I have the Cleopatra T-shirt."

White, who rarely talks to the press, toyed with a pair of glasses as she expressed her puzzlement at the criticisms of her: "You'd have to ask someone in the field why there is hostility, because I don't have any toward archeologists. To me, what they do is remarkable. They can re-create an entire civilization from a small shard." She and Levy had no idea that what they were doing might later be castigated. "If you go to Sotheby's or Christie's and buy something at a public auction, you don't think you are doing anything inappropriate," she said. "Or if you buy from a dealer on Madison Avenue, you don't think you are doing something wrong. It is legal to buy antiquities. It is hard to apply current standards to something that happened thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, you would have been sitting here smoking a cigarette." When she and Levy began collecting, she said, "it was considered something special and admirable. And we saw it as a very public-spirited thing to do." Speaking of Gill and Chippindale's analysis of her collection's provenance, she said, "Even the National Museum in Rome has objects where the provenance is unknown. They are reducing the great collections of the world to meaningless numbers."

When asked if she was looking forward to the opening of the galleries bearing her name, White unfolded and refolded her spectacles. "I am thrilled that the Met is going to have those wonderful galleries," she said, carefully. "I'm looking forward to seeing the galleries open to the public." The negotiations with the Italians over her own collection, she said, were under way, and she hoped that their claims would soon be resolved. Although she recently bought a Greek vase—one whose provenance was first published in the nineteenth century—she is no longer doing much collecting, she said: "It was something that Leon and I did together. It was very much a joint project." Still, the experience of living among her statues of masterful Greeks and famous Romans was, she said, a remarkable one. "It's like having a lot of friends," she said, with a wan smile. "I imagine them at night talking to each other, saying whatever guys say to each other at night: 'I *told* you not to turn left at the Rubicon.' "

When Picón took me on a detailed tour of the new galleries, pointing out some of his favorite acquisitions and the most celebrated items from the Met's long-standing collection, he was careful to note the provenance of each object. In the newly refurbished treasury—a small chamber, formerly a men's room, in which ancient gold and silver are displayed—he showed me a gold armband studded with garnets and an emerald, dating from the second or third century B.C. "I bought this in 1999," he said. "It was in the Japanese collection of a man called Ishiguro, who had the best French restaurant in Tokyo. It was dirt cheap, something like eighty-five thousand dollars. You go to one of New York's noble emporia—without naming any particular jewellers—and that won't get you far." He stopped at a funerary urn; the lid and a side panel were missing. "Look at this fabulous urn, which was found in the eighteen-nineties southeast of Rome, published, and sold privately—completely legally—in the teens," he said. "A fragment appeared out of the blue at auction in 2002, and I bought it. I found another fragment in the collection of a friend of mine, who bought it in London eight years ago. And it joined! So I have hopes that I will find the rest, and the lid." He paused at an enormous chunk of porphyry, the color of venous blood, that featured carvings of flowers and, at its base, a lion's paw. "This was in the Hever Collection, in England," he said. "I bought it in 1992. This was one of two supports for a bath. Another fragment is in the Palazzo Capponi, in Florence, and I found another two years ago in a house in Scotland. Another part, one of my Italian colleagues says, is in a church in Rome. It is indestructible. To have one of these things, with this magical floral pattern, and these paws! It is the most sumptuous ancient porphyry carving in America." We stopped at an enormous sarcophagus, intricately carved with an image of Dionysos and the Four Seasons. "This is from Badminton Hall, from the Dukes of Beaufort," he said. "A great figure of Dionysos on his panther, very grand." The sarcophagus sat upon four black marble balls and a plinth that was designed by William Kent, the Palladian architect, in the early seventeen-hundreds; the plinth bore the legend "Probably Found in Rome." Picón said, "It was sold by the Italians! It wasn't stolen. They paid money for it, and the Italians made money selling it. They still make money selling things—whether it is legal or not, that is up to the politicians."

We ascended to the mezzanine, where the museum's Etruscan art is displayed, the highlight of which is a bronze chariot, or biga. Picón said that the chariot, which looks like something Cecil B. De Mille would have been thrilled to order up from the props department, is "the grandest piece of sixth-century Etruscan bronze anywhere in the world. It has a representation of the arms of Achilles, and an image of Thetis, the mother of Achilles, handing him his armor. Homeric iconography, fabulous quality."

The chariot, which the Met bought in 1903, has been the object of its own restitution bid, although a rather less successful one than that concerning the Euphronios krater. The claim has been made by a lawyer in Atlanta named Tito Mazzetta, on behalf of Monteleone di Spoleto, the Umbrian village in which the biga was discovered and from which Mazzetta's family hails. "My grandmother told me that she had played on the biga when it was found," Mazzetta said when I called him about the case. He explained that it had been discovered by a peasant farmer named Vannozzi as he was plowing his land: "He pulled out the chariot, and he pulled out all these ornaments and shields that had been buried with it, and he put them all around his house. He used the shields to boil water in." A dealer of antiquities from a neighboring town came by and, recognizing the potential value of the find, offered to buy the chariot and pots—he called them *ferro vecchio*, or junk—for nine hundred and fifty lire, enough for Vannozzi to buy shingles for his roof. Afterward, it was alleged in the Italian parliament in 1904, the chariot was smuggled to Paris. The Italian journalist Mario La Ferla, in a new book titled "La Biga Rapita" ("The Stolen Chariot"), claims that it was stored in the basement of the Crédit Lyonnais until J. P. Morgan, then a trustee of the Met, arranged for its acquisition and transport to New York. (The Met did not respond to a request for comment on La Ferla's assertion.)

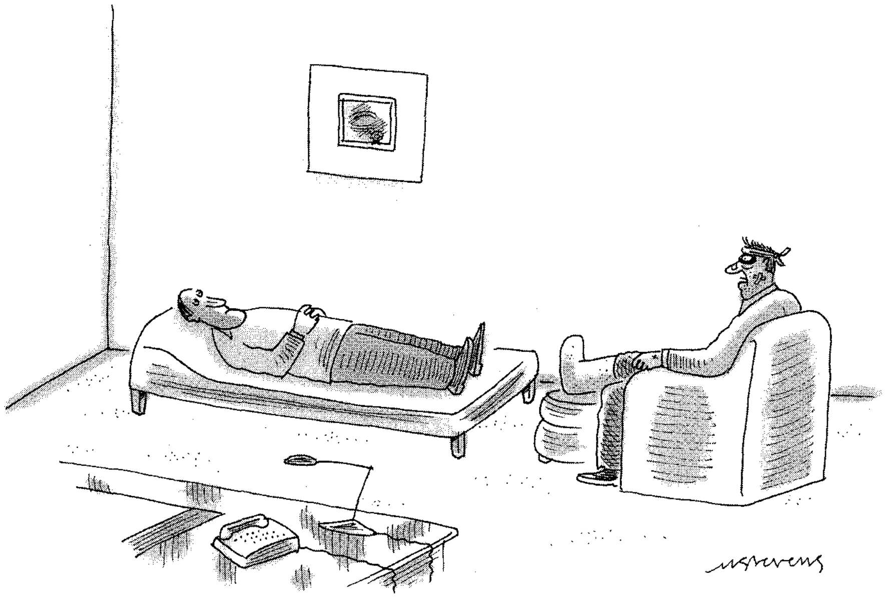
"I love to go around the museums," Mazzetta told me. "They do make a great contribution. But I am offended by the way they manage to get what they got. Maybe for them the biga is just another piece of art, but for us it's the Liberty Bell." The return of the chariot to the regional capital of Perugia, or even to Rome, an hour and a half away, would provide a much needed boost to the region, Mazzetta said. The mayor of Monteleone, which has a population of about six hundred and fifty, has even grander aspirations. "He would be very happy to have an Etruscan museum in Monteleone," Mazzetta said. The Met, meanwhile, has dismissed Mazzetta's claims. "I'm sorry, I am not even going to spend any time discussing this claim," Picón told me. "It was bought in Paris. You can't sell it and then ask for it back."

One Saturday morning, I met Picón at his apartment, which is on a quiet, tree-lined block in the East Seventies, not far from the Met. The apartment had a loftlike living room with fourteen-foot ceilings, two walls of which were lined with books—art-history texts and sales catalogues, some of which dated back a century, many of which Picón had annotated with careful pencil marks. There were works of contemporary art, including a portrait of Picón by Philip Pearlstein, which was a fiftieth-birthday gift—"You can paint me as long as you don't ask me to take my shirt off," Picón had told him—and a couch that Picón suspected was Biedermeier and which he bought from the estate of the late silent-movie star Pola Negri, who had been a neighbor in San Antonio. A door balanced on two nineteenth-century marble capitals and covered with a kilim served as a table; near the window stood a pockmarked marble torso, also from the nineteenth century, which Picón bought at Sotheby's in England. "It had been stuck in a garden, covered with ivy, God knows," Picón said.

The apartment is an expression of Picón's taste, as well as that of his partner, Andrew Kepler, an architect; and Picón sees no reason that a museum should not also exercise discernment in what it displays, even if by doing so it risks charges of élitism. "What are we supposed to do, show you the worst example and the best example in the primary galleries? Is that what museums are about?" he said. "If I want to spend three wonderful hours learning something about sixth-century China, I don't want to see their Tupperware. But some archeologists only care about the dirt. I don't care about the bones, and the person buried there. I care about what this person took with him or her, what it says about them, what it says about their imagination, their concept of quality, what they would like to be remembered for. What can you know about them, anyway? That he or she died at the age of thirty-five, with no teeth?" A visit to a museum, he said, should be a pleasure, and seeing masterpieces was a pleasure. "Of course it is uplifting—why bother to take care of broken objects of the past if it is not going to be edifying, instructive?" he said. "I think most intelligent people take it for granted that it will be of interest, that they will learn something, that they will be moved by it."

One of the Met's founding trustees, Joseph H. Choate, declared that the museum's mission was "to humanize, to educate, and refine a practical and laborious people." The very first item acquired by the museum, when it was chartered in 1870, was an ancient tomb—which, along with a hundred and seventy-four paintings, constituted the initial collection at the museum's original location, a former dance academy on Fifth Avenue between Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Streets. The sarcophagus, which dates from the third century and is decorated with garlands, was found in Tarsus, which is now in Turkey, and was donated to the fledgling museum by its discoverer, Abdo Debbas. "They got twelve buffalo and dragged it out, because it was so heavy," Picón told me. "I guess people would call that 'looted' now, right?" He smiled at the absurdity. "You cannot put modern terms to old history," he said. "How was the Berlin Museum formed? How was the Louvre formed? What did Napoleon do in Italy? How was the British Museum formed? You return all the contents of the British Museum and you close it down?"

At the time that Abdo Debbas found the sarcophagus, Picón recalled, there were no scientific excavations. "Archeology had not been born as a discipline, but things could be found, and this is what our distinguished colleagues in the dirt fields forget," he said. "This was found by this man on his property, and he said, 'I want to give this to the New World, from the Old World.' He was an Ottoman citizen—you cannot say Turkish, because Turkey did not yet exist. It's like Italy. The Metropolitan Museum is six months older than Italy. Italy unified in 1870, six months after we were founded. That puts things in perspective, eh?" ♦



"You left your demons here last week."

FICTION

STILL-LIFE

BY DON DeLILLO

When he appeared at the door, it was not possible, a man come out of an ash storm, all blood and slag, reeking of burned matter, with pinpoint glints of slivered glass in his face. He looked immense, in the doorway, with a gaze that had no distance in it. He carried a briefcase and stood slowly nodding. She thought he might be in shock but didn't know what this meant in precise terms, medical terms. He walked past her toward the kitchen and she tried calling her doctor, then 911, then the nearest hospital, but all she heard was the drone of overloaded lines. She turned off the TV set, not sure why, protecting him from the news he'd just walked out of, that's why, and then went into the kitchen. He was sitting at the table, and she poured him a glass of water and told him that Justin was with his grandmother, released early from school and also being protected from the news, at least as it concerned his father.

He said, "Everybody's giving me water."

She thought he could not have travelled all this distance or even climbed the stairs if he'd suffered serious injury, grievous blood loss.

Then he said something else. His briefcase sat beside the table like something yanked out of a landfill. He said there was a shirt coming down out of the sky.

She poured water on a dishcloth and wiped dust and ash from his hands, face, and head, careful not to disturb the glass fragments. There was more blood than she'd realized at first, and then she began to realize something else—that his cuts and abrasions were not severe or numerous enough to account for all this blood. It was not his blood. Most of it came from somebody else.

She said to her mother, "There he was in the doorway, up from the dead. It's so lucky Justin was here with you. Because it would have been awful for him to see his father like that. Like gray soot head to toe, I don't know, like smoke, standing there, with blood on his face and clothes."

KEVIN TRAGESER, "WASHINGTON STREET" (2001)

"We did a puzzle, an animal puzzle, horses in a field."

Her mother's apartment was not far from Fifth Avenue, with art on the walls, painstakingly spaced, and small bronze pieces on tables and bookshelves. Today the living room was in a state of happy disarray. Justin's toys and games were scattered across the floor, subverting the timeless quality of the room, and this was nice, Lianne thought, because it was otherwise hard not to whisper in such a setting.

"I didn't know what to do. I mean, with the phones out. Finally, we walked to the hospital. Walked, step by step, like walking a child."

"Why was he there in the first place, in your apartment?"

"I don't know."

"Why didn't he go straight to a hospital? Down there, downtown. Why didn't he go to a friend's place?"

Friend meant girlfriend, an unavoidable jab. She had to do it, couldn't help herself.

"I don't know."

"You haven't discussed this. Where is he now?"

"He's all right."

"What *have* you discussed?"

"No major problems, physical."

"What have you discussed?" she said.

Her mother, Nina, had taught at universities in California and New York before retiring two years earlier, the So-and-So Professor of Such-and-Such, as Keith once called her. She was pale and thin, her mother, following knee-replacement surgery. She was finally and resolutely old. This is what she wanted, it seemed: to be old and tired, to embrace old age, take up old age, surround herself with it. There were the canes, there were the medications, there were the afternoon naps, the dietary restrictions, the doctor's appointments.

"There's nothing to discuss right now. He needs to stay away from things, including discussions."

"Reticent."

"You know Keith."

"I've always admired that about him. He gives the impression there's something deeper to him than hiking and skiing, or playing cards. But what?"

"Rock climbing. Don't forget."

"And you went with him. I did forget."

Her mother stirred in the chair, feet propped on the matching stool, late morning, still in her robe, dying for a cigarette.

"I like his reticence, or whatever it is," she said. "But be careful."

"He's reticent around you, or was, the few times there was actual communication."

"Be careful. He was in grave danger, I know. He had friends in there. I know that, too," her mother said. "But if you let your sympathy and good will affect your judgment. And Justin. Having a father around the house again."

"The kid is fine. Who knows how the kid is? He's fine, he's back in school," she said. "It reopened."

"But you worry. I know this. You like to nourish your fear."

"What's next? Don't you ask yourself? Not only next month. Years to come."

"Nothing is next. There is no next. This was next. Eight years ago, they planted a bomb in one of the towers. Nobody said what's next. This was next. The time to be afraid is when there's no reason to be afraid. Too late now."

Lianne stood by the window.

"But when the towers fell."

"I know."

"When this happened."

"I know."

"I thought he was dead."

"So did I," Nina said. "So many watching."

"Thinking, He's dead, she's dead."

"I know."

"Watching those buildings fall."

"First one, then the other. I know," her mother said.

They were silent for a time.

Nina said, "Of course the child is a blessing, but otherwise, you know better than I, marrying the man was a huge mistake, and you willed it, you went looking for it. You wanted to live a certain way, never mind the consequences. You wanted a certain thing and you thought Keith."

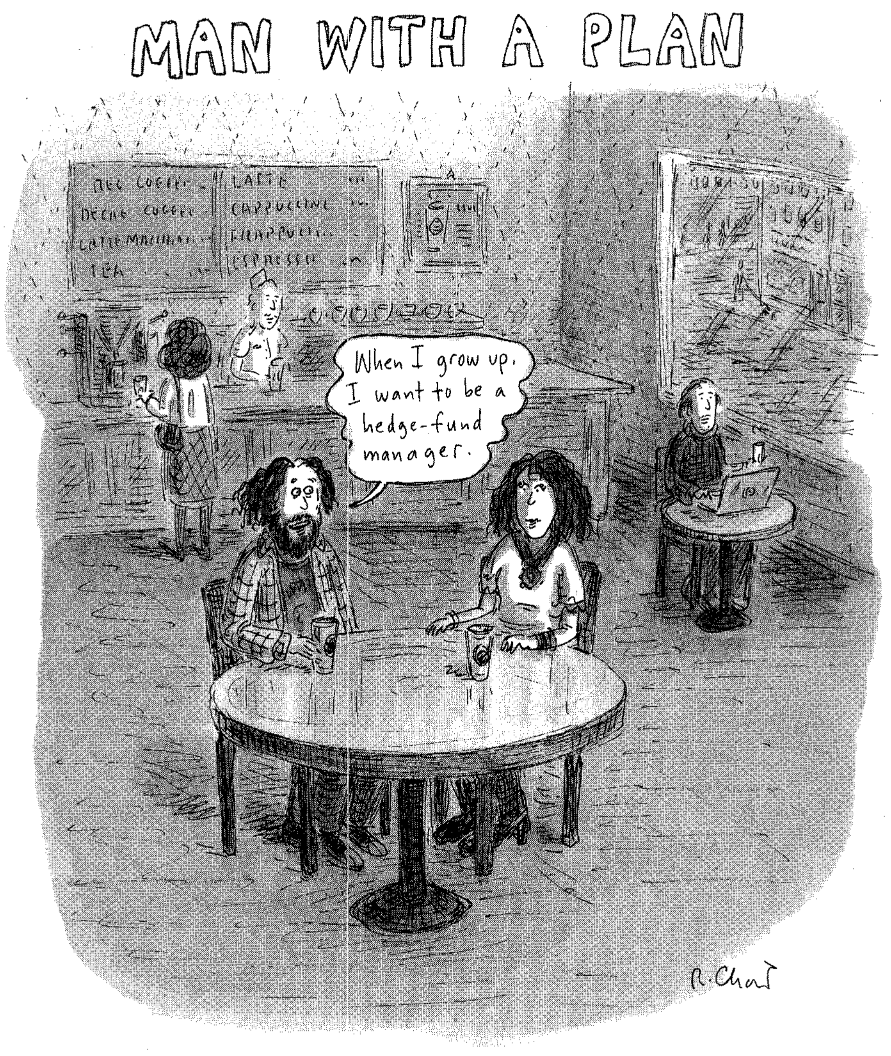
"What did I want?"

"You thought Keith would get you there."

"What did I want?"

"To feel dangerously alive. This was a quality you associated with your father. But that wasn't the case. Your father was at heart a careful man. And your son is a beautiful and sensitive child," she said. "But otherwise."

In truth, she loved this room, Lianne


MAN WITH A PLAN
When I grow up, I want to be a hedge-fund manager.
R. Chast

did, in its most composed form, without the games and the scattered toys. Her mother had been living here for a few years only, and Lianne tended to see it as a visitor might, a space that was serenely self-possessed, and so what if it was a little intimidating. What she loved most was the two still-lifes on the north wall, by Giorgio Morandi, a painter her mother had studied and written about. They were groupings of bottles, jugs, biscuit tins, that was all, but there was something in the brushstrokes that held a mystery for her, or in the irregular edges of the vases and jars, some reconnoiter inward, human and obscure, away from the very light and color of the paintings. *Natura morta.* The Italian term for still-life seemed stronger than it had to be, ominous, even, but these were matters she hadn't talked about with her mother. Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment.

"You liked asking questions as a child. Insistently digging. But you were curious about the wrong things."

"They were my things, not yours."

"Keith wanted a woman who'd regret what she did with him. This is his style, to get a woman to do something she'll be sorry for. But the thing you did wasn't just a night or a weekend. He was made for weekends. The thing you did."

"This isn't the time."

"You actually married the man."

"And then I threw him out. I had strong objections, building up over time. What you object to is very different. He's not a scholar, not an artist. Doesn't paint, doesn't write poetry. If he did, you'd overlook everything else. He'd be the raging artist. He'd be allowed to behave unspeakably. Tell me something."

"You have more to lose this time. Self-respect. Think about that."

"Tell me this. What kind of painter is allowed to behave more unspeakably, figurative or abstract?"

He signed a document, then another. There were people on gurneys and there were others, a few, in wheelchairs, and he had trouble writing his name and more trouble fastening the hospital gown behind him. Lianne was there to help. Then she wasn't anymore, and an orderly put him in a wheelchair and pushed him down a corridor and through a series of examining rooms, with urgent cases rolling by.

Doctors in scrubs and paper masks checked his airway and took blood-pressure readings. They were interested in potentially fatal reactions to injury—hemorrhage, dehydration. They looked for diminished blood flow to tissues. They studied the contusions on his body and peered into his eyes and ears. Someone gave him an EKG. Through the open door, he saw I.V. racks go floating past. They tested his hand grip and took X-rays. They told him things he could not absorb about a ligament or a cartilage, a tear or a sprain.

Someone took the glass out of his face. The man talked throughout, using an instrument he called a pickup to extract the small fragments of glass that were not deeply embedded. He said that most of the worst cases were in hospitals downtown or at the trauma center on a pier. He said that survivors were not appearing in the numbers expected. He was propelled by events and could not stop talking. Doctors and volunteers were standing idle, he said, because the people they were waiting for were mostly back there, in the ruins. He said he would use a clamp for the deeper fragments.

"Where there are suicide bombings. Maybe you don't want to hear this."

"I don't know."

"In those places where it happens, the survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of a better term, and it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber's body. The bomber is blown to bits, literally bits and pieces, and fragments of flesh and bone come flying outward with such force and velocity that they get wedged, they get fixed in the body of anyone who's in striking range.

Do you believe it? A student is sitting in a café. She survives the attack. Then, months later, they find these little, like, pellets of flesh, human flesh that got driven into her skin. They call this organic shrapnel."

He tweezered another splinter of glass out of Keith's face.

"This is something I don't think you have," he said.

Justin's two best friends were a sister and brother who lived in a high-rise ten blocks away. Lianne had trouble remembering their names at first and called them the Siblings, and soon the name stuck. Justin said that this was their real name anyway, and she thought, What a funny kid when he wants to be.

She saw Isabel on the street, the mother of the Siblings, and they stood at the corner talking.

"That's what kids do, absolutely, but I have to admit I'm beginning to wonder."

"They sort of conspire."

"Yes, and sort of talk in code, and they spend a lot of time at the window in Katie's room, with the door closed."

"You know they're at the window?"

"Because I can hear them talking when I walk by and I know that's where they're standing. They're at the window, talking in this code. Maybe Justin tells you things?"

"I don't think so."

"Because it's getting a little strange, frankly, all the time they spend, first, sort of huddled together, and then, I don't know, like endlessly whispering in this semi-gibberish, which is what kids do, absolutely, but still."

Lianne wasn't sure what this was all about. It was about three kids being kids together.

"Justin's getting interested in the weather. I think they're doing clouds in school," she said, realizing how hollow this sounded.

"They're not whispering about clouds."

"O.K."

"My kids totally don't want to discuss the matter. Katie enforces the thing. She basically inspires fear in her brother. I thought maybe you would know something."

"I don't think so."

"Justin says nothing about any of this?"

"No. What would he say?"

"Exactly," Isabel said.

Keith was tall, with cropped hair, and she thought he looked like Army, like career military, still in shape and beginning to look seasoned, not in combat but in the pale rigors of this life, in separation perhaps, in living alone, being a father from a distance.

He was in bed now and watched her, a few feet away, begin to button her shirt. They slept in the same bed because she could not tell him to use the sofa and because she liked having him here beside her. He didn't seem to sleep. He lay on his back and talked but mostly listened, and this was all right. She didn't need to know a man's feelings about everything, not anymore and not this man. She liked the spaces he made. She liked dressing in front of him. She knew the time was coming when he'd press her to the wall before she finished dressing. He'd get out of bed and look at her, and she'd stop what she was doing and wait for him to come and press her to the wall.

He lay on a long narrow table within the closed unit. There was a pillow under his knees and a pair of track lights overhead, and he tried to listen to the music. Inside the powerful noise of the scanner, he fixed his attention on the instruments, separating one set from the other—strings, woodwinds, brass. The noise was a violent staccato knocking, a metallic clamor that made him feel as if he were deep inside the core of a science-fiction city about to come undone.

He wore a device on his wrist to produce a detailed image, and the sense of helpless confinement made him think of something the radiologist had said, a Russian whose accent he found reassuring, because Russians are serious people who place weight on every word, and maybe that's why he chose classical music to listen to when she asked him to make a selection. He heard her now in his headset saying that the next sequence of noise would last three minutes, and when the music resumed he thought of Nancy Dinnerstein, who ran a sleep clinic in Boston. People paid her to put them to sleep. Or the other Nancy, what's-her-name, briefly, between incidental sex acts, in Portland that time, Oregon, without a last name. The city had a last name, the woman did not.

The noise was unbearable, alternating between the banging-shattering sound and an electronic pulse of varied pitch. He listened to the music and thought of what the radiologist had said, that once it's over, in her Russian accent, you forget instantly the whole experience, so how bad can it be, she'd said, and he thought this sounded like a description of dying. But that was another matter, wasn't it, another kind of noise, and the trapped man does not come sliding out of his tube. He listened to the music. He tried hard to hear the flutes and to distinguish them from the clarinets, if there were clarinets, but he was unable to do this, and the only countervailing force was Nancy Dinnerstein drunk in Boston, and it gave him a dumb and helpless hard-on, thinking of her in his drafty hotel room with a limited view of the river.

He heard the voice in his headset saying that the next sequence of noise would last seven minutes.

Now Lianne stood at the foot of the bed and watched him lying there, late one night, after she'd finished working, and asked him finally and quietly, "Why did you come here?"

"That's the question, isn't it?"

"For Justin, yes?"

This was the answer she wanted, because it made the most sense.

"So he could see you were alive," she said.

But it was also only half the answer, and she realized she needed to hear something beyond this, a broader motive for his action or intuition or whatever it was.

He thought for a long moment.

"It's hard to reconstruct. I don't know how my mind was working. A guy came along in a van, a plumber, I think, and he drove me here. His radio had been stolen, and he knew from the sirens that something was going on but he didn't know what. At some point, he had a clear view downtown, but all he could see was one tower. He thought one tower was blocking his view of the other tower, or the smoke was. He saw the smoke. He drove east a ways and looked again, and there was still only one tower. One tower made no sense. Then he turned uptown, because that's where he was going, and finally he saw me and picked me up. By this time, the second tower was gone. Eight radios in three years, he said. All stolen. An electrician, I think. He had a water bottle he kept pushing in my face."

"Your apartment, you knew you couldn't go there."

"I knew the building was too close to the towers, and maybe I knew I couldn't go there and maybe I wasn't even thinking about that. Either way, that's not why I came here. It was more than that."

She felt better now.

"He wanted to take me to the hospital, the guy in the van, but I told him to bring me here."

He looked at her.

"I gave him this address," he said for emphasis, and she felt better still.

It was a simple matter, outpatient surgery, a ligament or a cartilage, with Lianne in the reception area waiting to take him back to the apartment. On the table he thought of his buddy Rumsey, briefly, just before or after he lost sensation. The doctor, the anesthetist, injected him with a heavy sedative or other agent, a substance containing a memory suppressant, or maybe there were two shots, but there was Rumsey in his chair by the window, which meant the memory was not suppressed or the substance hadn't taken effect yet, a dream, a waking image, whatever it was, Rumsey in the smoke, things coming down.

It's interesting, isn't it? To sleep with your husband, a thirty-eight-year-old woman and a thirty-nine-year-old man, and never a breathy sound of sex. He's your ex-husband who was never technically ex, the man you married in another lifetime. She dressed and undressed; he watched and did not. It was strange but interesting. A tension did not build. This was extremely strange. She wanted him here, nearby, but felt no edge of self-contradiction or self-denial. Just waiting, that was all, an extended pause in recognition of a thousand sour days and nights, not so easily set aside. The matter needed time. It could not happen the way things did in normal course. And it's interesting, isn't it, the way you move about the bedroom, routinely near-naked, and the respect you show for the past, the deference to its fervors of the wrong kind, its passions of cut and burn.

She wanted contact, and so did he.

This time the woman showed up in the bakery, the mother of the Siblings. She walked in just after Lianne did and joined her after taking a number from the dispenser on the counter.

"I'm just wondering about the binoculars. He's not, you know, the most outgoing child."

She smiled at Lianne, warmly and falsely, in a fragrance of glazed cakes, a mother-to-mother look, like we both know how these kids have enormous gleaming worlds they don't share with their parents.

"Because he always has them lately. I just wondered, you know, what he might have told you one way or the other."

Lianne didn't know what she was talking about. She looked into the broad and florid face of the man behind the counter. The answer wasn't there.

"He shares them with my kids, so that's not the problem, because their father promised them a pair, but we haven't gotten around—you know, binoculars, not the highest priority, and my Katie's being supersecret and her brother's her brother, loyal to a fault."

"You mean what are they looking at, behind closed doors?"

"I thought maybe Justin."

"Can't be much, can it? Maybe hawks. You know about the redtails."

"No, it's definitely something else. I'm sure of this, absolutely, because the binoculars are part of the whole hush-hush syndrome these kids are engulfed in."

"I don't think so," Lianne said.

"This is their secret. And I thought maybe Justin. Because my kids totally blank out when I bring up the subject."

She hadn't known that Justin was taking the binoculars on his visits to the Siblings. They weren't his binoculars, exactly, although she guessed it was all right for him to use them without permission. But maybe not, she thought, waiting for the man to call her number.

"Aren't they doing birds in school?"

"Last time it was clouds."

"Turns out I was wrong about the clouds. But they're definitely studying birds and birdcalls and habitats," she told the woman. "They go trekking through Central Park."

She realized how much she hated to stand around with a number in her fist. She hated this regimen of assigned numbers, strictly enforced, in a confined space, with nothing at the end of the process but a small white bow-tied box of pastry.

There was an old-fashioned pencil sharpener clamped to the edge of the table in Justin's room. She stood at the door and watched him insert each pencil into the slot and then crank the handle. He had red-and-blue combination pencils, Cedar Pointe pencils, Dixon Trimlines, vintage Eberhard Fabers. He had pencils from hotels in Zurich and Hong Kong. There were pencils fashioned from tree bark, rough and knotted. There were pencils from the design store of the Museum of Modern Art. He had Mirado Black Warriors. He had pencils from a SoHo shop that were inscribed along the shaft with cryptic sayings from Tibet.

It was awful, in a way, all these fragments of status washing up in some little kid's room.

But what she loved to watch was the way he blew the microscopic shavings off the pencil point after he finished sharpening. If he were to do it all day, she'd watch all day, pencil after pencil. He'd crank and blow, crank and blow, a ritual more thorough and righteous than the formal signing of a document of state by eleven men with medals.

When he saw her watching, he said, "What?"

"I talked to Katie's mother today. Katie and what's-his-name. She told me about the binoculars."

He stood and watched her, pencil in hand.

"Katie and what's-his-name."

"Robert," he said.

"Her little brother Robert. And his

older sister Katie. Is this something I should know about? And are you supposed to take the binoculars out of the house without permission?"

He stood and watched. He had pale hair, his father's, and a certain sombreness of body, a restraint, his own, that gave him an uncanny discipline in games, in physical play.

"Did your father give you permission?"

He stood and watched.

"What's so interesting about the view from that room? You can tell me that, can't you?"

She leaned against the door, prepared to remain for three, four, five days, in the context of parental body language, or until he answered.

He moved one hand away from his body slightly, the hand without the pencil, palm up, and executed the faintest change in facial expression, causing an arched indentation between the chin and lower lip, like an old man's mute version of the young boy's opening remark, which was "What?"

Keith sat next to the table, left forearm placed along the near edge, hand dangling from the adjoining edge, curled into a gentle fist. He raised the hand without lifting his forearm and kept it in the air for five seconds. He did this ten times.

It was their term, "gentle fist," the rehab center's term, used in the instruction sheet.

He found these sessions restorative, four times a day, the wrist extensions, the ulnar deviations. These were the true countermeasures to the damage he'd suffered in the tower, in the descending chaos. It was not the MRI and not the surgery that had brought him closer to well-being. It was this modest home program, the counting of seconds, the counting of repetitions, the times of day he reserved for the exercises, the ice he applied following each set of exercises.

There were the dead and the maimed. His injury was slight, but it wasn't the torn cartilage that was the subject of this effort. It was the chaos, the levitation of ceilings and floors, the voices choking in smoke. He sat in deep concentration, working on the hand shapes, the bend of the wrist toward the floor, the bend of the wrist toward the ceiling, the forearm flat on the table, the thumb-up configuration in certain setups, the use of the uninvolved hand to apply pressure to the involved hand. He washed his splint in warm soapy water. He did not adjust his splint without consulting the therapist. He read the instruction sheet. He curled the hand into a gentle fist.

Her mother had said it clearly, years earlier.

"There's a certain man, an archetype. He's a model of dependability for his male friends, all the things a friend should be, an ally and a confidant, lends money, gives advice, loyal, and so on, but sheer hell on women. Living, breathing hell. The closer a woman gets, the clearer it becomes to him that she is not one of his male friends. And the more awful it becomes for her. This is Keith. This is the man you're going to marry."

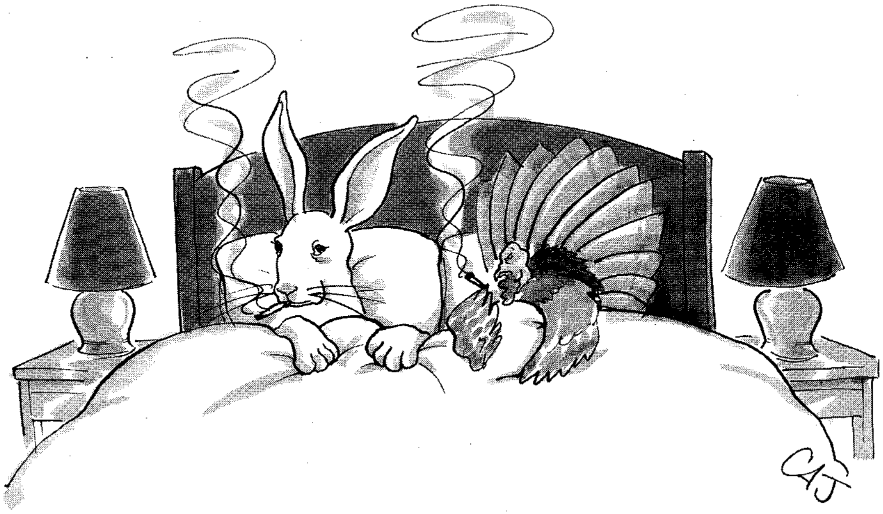
This is the man she marries.

He was a hovering presence now. There drifted through the rooms a sense of someone who has earned respectful attention. He was not quite returned to his body yet. Even the program of exercises he did for his postsurgical wrist seemed a little detached, four times a day, an odd set of extensions and flexions that resembled prayer in some remote northern province, among a repressed people, with periodic applications of ice. He spent time with Justin, taking him to school and picking him up, advising on homework. He wore the splint for a while, then stopped. He took the kid to the park to play catch. The kid could toss a baseball all day and be purely and inexhaustibly happy, unmarked by sin, anyone's, down the ages. Throw and catch. She watched them in a field not far from the museum, into the sinking sun. When Keith did a kind of ball trick, using the right hand, the undamaged one, to flip the ball onto the back of the hand and then jerk the arm forward, propelling the ball backward along the forearm before knocking it into the air with his elbow and then catching it backhanded, she saw a man she'd never known before.

He began to think into the day, into the minute. It was being here in the apartment, alone for extended periods, that made this happen, being away from routine stimulus, all the streaming forms of office discourse. Things seemed still, clearer to the eye, oddly, in ways he didn't understand. He began to see what he was doing. He noticed things, all the small lost strokes of a day or a minute, how he licked his thumb and used it to lift a bread crumb off the plate and put it idly in his mouth. Only it wasn't so idle anymore. Nothing seemed familiar, being here, in a family again, and he felt strange to himself, or always had, but it was different now, because he was watching.

There were the walks to school with Justin and the walks back home alone, or somewhere else, just walking, and then he picked up the kid at school and it was back home again. There was a contained elation in these times, a feeling that was half hidden, something he knew but just barely, a whisper of self-disclosure.

The kid was trying to speak in monosyllables only, for long stretches. This was something his class was doing, a serious



By Easter, a pardoned turkey has often lost all sense of right and wrong.

game designed to teach the children something about the structure of words and the discipline required to frame clear thoughts. Lianne said, half seriously, that it sounded totalitarian.

"It helps me go slow when I think," Justin said to his father, measuring each word, noting the syllable count.

Keith as well was going slow, easing inward. He used to want to fly out of self-awareness, day and night, a body in raw motion. Now he finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience. Or he stands and looks. He stands at the window and sees what's happening in the street. Something is always happening, even on the quietest days and deep into night, if you stand awhile and look.

There were the walks to and from school, the meals he cooked, something he'd rarely done in the year and a half of their separation because it had made him feel like the last man alive, breaking eggs for dinner.

"We go home now," Justin said.

She was back from an early-morning run and stood sweating by the kitchen window, drinking water from a one-litre bottle and watching Keith eat breakfast.

"You're one of those madwomen running in the streets. Run around the reservoir."

"You think we look crazier than men."

"Only in the streets."

"I like the streets. This time of morning, there's something about the city, down by the river, streets half empty, cars blasting by on the Drive."

"Breathe deeply."

"I like running alongside the cars on the Drive."

"Take deep breaths," he said. "Let the fumes swirl into your lungs."

"I like the fumes. I like the breeze from the river."

"Run naked," he said.

"You do it, I'll do it."

"I'll do it if the kid does it," he said.

Justin was in his room, a Saturday, putting the last touches, last pokes of color, onto a portrait he'd been doing, in crayon, of his grandmother. Either that or drawing a picture of a bird, for school, which reminded her of something.

"He takes the binoculars over to the Siblings'. Any idea why?"

"They're searching the skies."

"For what?"

"Planes. One of them, I think it was the girl."

"Katie."

"Katie claims she saw the plane that hit tower one. She says she was home from school, sick, standing at the window when the plane flew by."

The building where the Siblings lived was known to some as the Godzilla Apartments, or simply as the Godzilla. It was forty stories or so in an area of town houses and other structures of modest height and it created its own weather systems, with strong currents of air that sometimes sheared down the face of the building and knocked old people to the pavement.

"Home sick. Do I believe that?"

"I think they're on the twenty-seventh floor," he said.

"Looking west across the park. This much is true."

"Did the plane fly down over the park?"

"Maybe the park, maybe the river," she said. "And maybe she was home sick and maybe she made it up."

"Either way."

"Either way, you're saying, they're looking for more planes."

"Waiting for it to happen again."

"That scares me," she said.

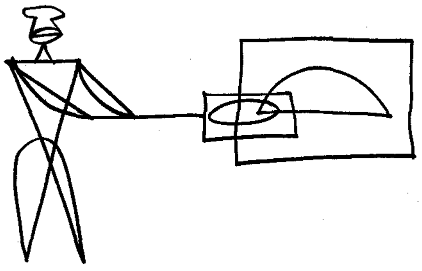
"This time with a pair of binoculars to help them make the sighting."

"That scares the hell out of me. God, there's something so awful about that. Damn kids with their goddam twisted powers of imagination."

She walked over to the table and picked half a strawberry out of his cereal bowl. Then she sat across from him, thinking and chewing.

Finally, she said, "The only thing I got out of Justin—the towers did not collapse."

"I told him they did."



"So did I," she said.

"They were hit but did not collapse. That's what he says."

"He didn't see it on TV. I didn't want him to see it. But I told him they came down. And he seemed to absorb it. But then, I don't know."

"He knows they came down, whatever he says about it."

"He has to know, don't you think? And he knows you were there."

"We talked about it," Keith said. "But only once."

"What did he say?"

"Not much. And neither did I."

"They're searching the skies."

"That's right," he said.

"This is what we get for putting a protective distance between children and news events."

"Except we didn't put a distance, not really," he said.

She looked at him.

"Why are you still here?"

She said this in a tone of gentlest curiosity.

"Are you planning to stay? Because I think this is something we need to talk about," she said. "I've forgotten how to talk to you. This is the longest talk we've had."

"You did it better than anybody. Talk to me. Maybe that was the problem."

"I guess I've unlearned it. Because I sit here thinking we have so much to say."

"We don't have so much to say. We used to say everything, all the time. We examined everything, all the questions, all the issues."

"All right."

"It practically killed us."

"All right. But is it possible? Here's my question," she said. "Is it possible you and I are done with conflict? You know what I mean. The everyday friction. The every-word, every-breath schedule we were on before we split. Is it possible that's over? We don't need that anymore. We can live without it. Am I right?"

"We're ready to sink into our little lives," he said.

They sat in a taxi going downtown and began to clutch each other, kissing and groping. She said, in urgent murmurs, *It's a movie, it's a movie.* At traffic lights, people crossing the street stopped to watch, two or three, seeming briefly to float above the windows, and sometimes only one. The others just crossed, those who didn't give a damn.

In the Indian restaurant the man at the podium said, "We do not seat incomplete tables."

In the beginning, she washed his clothes in a separate load. She had no idea why she did this. It was like he was dead.

She listened to what he said and let him know she was listening, mind and body, because listening is what would save them this time, keep them from falling into distortion and rancor.

What was ordinary was not more ordinary than usual, or less.

This was the man who would not submit to her need for probing intimacy, over-intimacy, the urge to ask, examine, delve, draw things out, trade secrets, tell everything. It was a need that had the body in it—hands, feet, genitals, scummy odors, clotted dirt—even if it was all talk or sleepy murmur. She wanted to absorb everything, childlike, the dust of stray sensations, whatever she could breathe in from other people's pores. She used to think she *was* other people. Other people have truer lives.

It's a movie, she kept saying, his hand in her pants, saying it, a moan in the shape of words, and at traffic lights people watched, a few, and the driver watched, lights or not, eyes gliding across the rearview mirror.

But then she might be wrong about what was ordinary. Maybe nothing was. Maybe there was a deep fold in the grain of things, the way things pass through the mind, the way time swings in the mind, which is the only place it meaningfully exists.

She read newspaper profiles of the dead, every one that was printed. Not to read them, every one, would have been an offense, a violation of responsibility and trust. But she also read them because she had to, out of some need that she did not try to interpret.

After the first time they made love, he was in the bathroom, at first light, and she got up to dress for her morning run but then pressed herself naked to the full-length mirror, face turned, hands raised to roughly head level. She pressed her body to the glass, eyes shut, and stayed for a long moment, nearly collapsed against the cool surface, abandoning herself to it. Then she put on her shorts and top and was lacing her shoes when he came out of the bathroom, clean-shaven, and saw the fogged marks of her face, hands, breasts, and thighs stamped on the mirror.

Every time she saw a videotape of the planes she moved a finger toward the power button on the remote. Then she kept on watching. The second plane coming out of that ice-blue sky, this was the footage that entered the body, that seemed to run beneath her skin, the fleeting sprint that carried lives and histories, theirs and hers, everyone's, into some other distance, out beyond the towers.

The skies she retained in memory were dramas of cloud and sea storm, or the electric sheen before summer thunder in the city, always belonging to the energies of sheer weather, of what was out there, air masses, water vapor, westerlies. This was different, a clear sky that carried human terror in those streaking aircraft, first one, then the other, the force of men's intent. Every helpless desperation set against the sky, voices crying to God, and how awful to imagine this, God's name on the tongues of killers and victims both, first one plane and then the other, the one that was nearly cartoon human, with flashing eyes and teeth, the second plane, the south tower.

He watched with her one time only. She knew she'd never felt so close to someone, watching the planes cross the sky. Standing by the wall, he reached toward the chair and took her hand. She bit her lip and watched. They would all be dead, passengers and crew, and thousands in the towers dead, and she felt it in her body, a deep pause, and thought, There he is, unbelievably, in one of those towers, and now his hand was on hers, in pale light, as though to console her for his dying.

He said, "It still looks like an accident, the first one. Even from this distance, way outside the thing, how many days later, I'm standing here thinking it's an accident."

"Because it has to be."

"It has to be," he said.

"The way the camera sort of shows surprise."

"But only the first one."

"Only the first," she said.

"The second plane, by the time the second plane appears," he said, "we're all a little older and wiser." ♦

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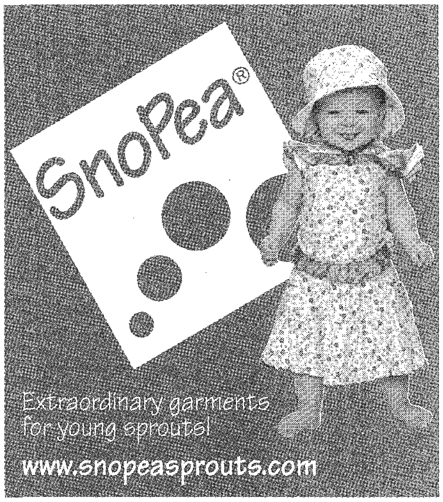

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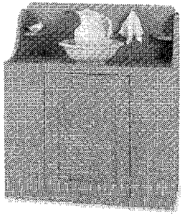

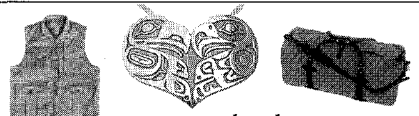

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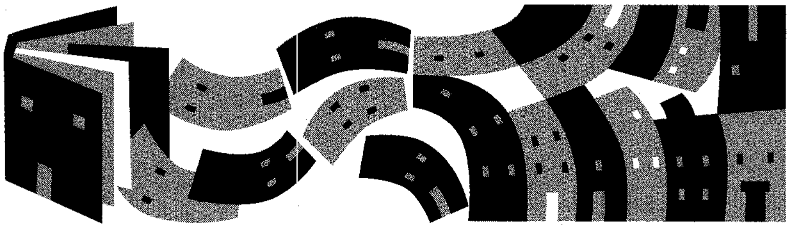

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Prince's new temple.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Permit me to plan your dream weekend. You're going to see a musician, a great one, play at a small club in Las Vegas. For a hundred and seventy-five dollars, you could stand on the dance floor in front of the stage. But, if you want to sit down, house policy requires that you buy at least two tickets and pay an additional three hundred and seventy-five dollars, which entitles you to a bottle of alcohol and seats at a V.I.P. table at the edge of the dance floor. At midnight, the performer will begin a hundred-minute set. Afterward, as you wait half an hour in a queue for a taxi to drive you to a hotel that is roughly three blocks away but inaccessible by foot, you will see adults throwing up into garbage cans and waving plastic necklaces above their heads. You will get to bed at approximately 3 A.M.

Why would you do this? Because the musician you are seeing is Prince, who made an agreement with the Rio hotel—its purple décor reportedly pleased him—to turn Club Rio into a club called 3121, after Prince's agreeably funky but modest 2006 album of the same name. Prince has been performing midnight shows there on Fridays and Saturdays since November (though he's missed a few weekends). It doesn't matter that the artist, who is forty-eight, has released only a handful of decent recordings in the past fifteen years. He is perhaps the greatest living performer in the pop tradition. The fact that, as he says during his live shows, "my friends all look different—I look just the same" simply enhances the impression that he is our Dorian Gray, if Gray had been raised by Cher and James Brown. Prince's songwriting heyday, which stretched from 1979 to 1988, is rivalled only by the Beatles' in generosity, formal variety, and intensity.

For a while, songwriting seemed to be Prince's primary gift, and unstoppably so. In 1984, both Sheila E. and Chaka Khan scored top-ten hits with songs he had written. (Prince had three of his own that year—as he often notes during his set, "So many hits, so little time.") This tally doesn't include the work he did for acts within his orbit that he produced, played with, or wrote for: the Family (for whom he wrote "Nothing Compares 2 U," the ballad of unbearable longing later made famous by Sinéad O'Connor), Vanity 6, Madhouse, Jill Jones, the Time, and Apollonia 6. The nature of Prince's implausibly enormous gift made this overambitious work arrangement seem logical. He cannot limit himself to one voice, style, or emotional position. His songs can be maudlin, clever, obvious, as ornate as Versailles, as simple as pencils, hilarious, crude, breathtakingly wise, corny, and so musically rich that he seems to be working with instruments nobody else owns.

Take several songs from his 1987 masterpiece, "Sign o' the Times." On "Housequake," Prince turns one of James Brown's vamps into a hybrid that is simultaneously homage, parody, and elaboration. "Housequake" combines live horn solos, an irresistibly noisy digital drum-machine pattern that Brown himself would never have used, blasts of guitar and horn that paraphrase Brown's late-sixties work, and Prince's own voice, sped up in pitch just enough to make his opening announcement—"Shut up, already. Damn!"—sound like a cameo by one of the Chipmunks. The menacing "Hot Thing" comes from Prince's Hymnal of Lubricity, a style that he developed on the 1981 "Controversy" album. He pairs tiny music—often a buzzing keyboard bass line and a minimal electronic pulse—with a big come-on: "Hot thang, you should give your folks a call. Hot thang, tell them you're going to the crystal ball. Hot thang, tell them you're coming home late if you're coming home at all." But "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man" is the emotional inverse of "Hot Thing" 's priapic monomania. The song is breezy pop rock, with lyrics that recall the psychological sophistication of Smokey Robinson's "The Tears of a Clown." A woman is crying, looking for "a good man" at "10:35 on a lonely Friday night," to get over a departed lover who has "left her with a baby and another one on the way." Instead of taking advantage of the woman, Prince sees the situation from her perspective and demurs honorably: "I said, Baby, don't waste your time, I know what's on your mind. I may be qualified for a one-night stand, but I could never take the place of your man." Pop songs this empathic are rarely so free of sanctimony. Prince does not present himself as anyone's moral better; he even pauses to mention that, despite her despair, "she was looking all right." And these are just three songs from one album. So little time.

Though Prince is no longer writing at this level, or with such frequency, his performing skills are undiminished, as demonstrated by his recent Super Bowl half-time medley and by a set at 3121 a few Saturdays ago. Before he appeared, at midnight, his personal d.j., DJ Rashida, presented a two-hour primer on Prince and his affinities, using hits of his that he wouldn't be playing in that night's performance ("When Doves Cry," "Let's Work," "Pop Life") and interspersing them with a catholic selection of songs by Sade, Beastie Boys, Jimi Hendrix, and Cocteau Twins. As the d.j. played, a series of film clips were projected on screens

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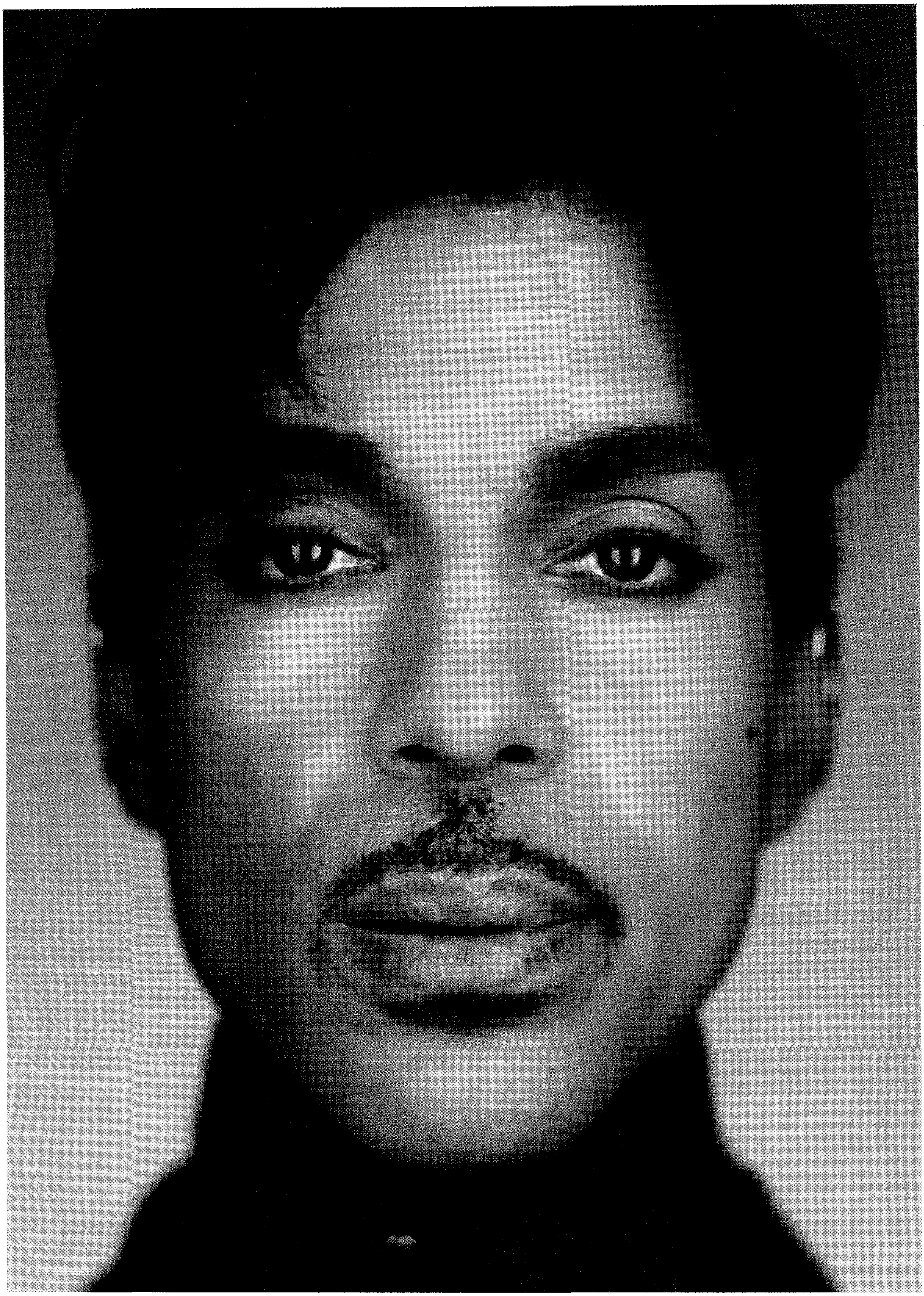

Weekends in Vegas: Perhaps the greatest living performer in the pop tradition. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

SARAH LAWRENCE

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around the perimeter of the club. Images of John Travolta from "Saturday Night Fever" and Bill (Bojangles) Robinson tap dancing were followed by shots of Prince, in tuxedo, doing his own moves, in the 1986 film "Under the Cherry Moon." The visuals ended with a sequence of redundant testimonials from celebrities, including Randy Jackson and Salma Hayek, who informed us solemnly that Prince is "creative."

Though Prince became a Jehovah's Witness a few years ago and stopped performing some of his filthier songs—"Darling Nikki" must remain eternally alone in the hotel lobby, amusing herself—Prince the Physical Presence has not stopped transmitting sexuality, something he can do even while changing guitars. He took the stage at 3121 in black hip-hugging flares, a red shirt, and what looked like the top half of a tuxedo jacket. Almost thirty years into Prince's career, there is still nobody else in the pop market who sends a similar combination of signals. Though he's just over five feet, lithe and pixieish, he never seems dwarfed by others onstage, and he is absolutely at ease guiding his ten-piece band. His backup dancers—Nandy and Maya McClean, twenty-six-year-old twins from Sydney, Australia—were energetic and effectively underclad, but Prince was still the most seductive presence onstage. When he simply cocked his head and smiled, it seemed like an act of public lewdness. He is androgynous but not effeminate, perfectly formed (one of the V.I.P.s at my table kept pointing out his butt to her husband, who didn't seem to mind) but not in the way of a gym rat. Prince's casual virtuosity, combined with his evident joy in wearing tight clothing, made every song he did entertaining.

Too much time was devoted to recent material, like the underdeveloped funk vamps "3121" and "Musicology," which gave the young rhythm section—the thunderous drummer Cora Coleman-Dunham and her husband, Joshua Dunham, the bass player—a chance to solo and allowed Prince time to retire to his private lounge below the stage. "Housequake" would have been preferable to the band's spirited cover of James Brown's "Pass the Peas," a nod to the recently departed. Prince doing James is entertaining, but his own songs are so valuable that it's disappointing to watch him dwell on someone else's, no matter how well his young sax player imitates Maceo Parker.

Still, he gave us more than enough. He has long been adept at mimicking the voicelike cry of Jimi Hendrix's guitar playing, but he has often settled for impressive flurries of notes rather than attempting more structured improvisations. (When everything comes easily, distinguishing the good from the very good—not a challenge most performers face—can be a problem.) Prince's rhythm-guitar playing was terse and unpredictable during "Kiss," a simple song that usually limits the guitar to brief punctuation, and when the show ended, with "Purple Rain," he did more than simply wail. He played the long, ecstatic notes that you would expect, but at odd intervals, interrupted by hiccups and pauses. Grimacing, he walked out onto a small platform that extended slightly over the dance floor; he threw in a few blasts of noise and picked out dog-legging figures on the low end of the neck, sounding a little like Television's Tom Verlaine.

The obvious sign that Prince has shifted his focus from songwriting to playing is his latest single, "Guitar," which was briefly available on one of his Web sites. At 3121, he strapped on an acoustic guitar and began another mini medley by playing several verses of this simple new song: "I love you, baby, but not like I love my guitar." He smiled and shimmied and made Borscht Belt jokes as he segued into an extended blues vamp: "If your girl says you're not in shape, fellas, tell them round is a shape." It felt slightly bittersweet to hear Prince add verses from two older songs, the gorgeous and melancholy "Sometimes It Snows in April" and the still astonishing, Beatles-y "Raspberry Beret," whose carefree melody and conversational lyrics are simultaneously salacious, wholesome, and ludicrous. "A raspberry beret, and if it was warm she wouldn't wear much more." Prince's inamorata may not have worn a lot of clothing, but could he possibly ever have worked in a "five and dime"? Can you picture Prince on anybody's farm, much less Old Man Johnson's? For those three minutes, sure. This is pop songwriting at its finest, where unlikely images seem more vivid than your own memories. ♦

WOMEN'S WORK

Feminist art at the Brooklyn Museum.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"Global Feminisms" is a big, high-minded, intermittently enjoyable show of about a hundred mostly young and lesser-known female artists from about fifty countries. It inaugurates the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, in a suite of galleries anchored by the permanent installation of Judy Chicago's much travelled "Dinner Party" (1974-79). The show includes some painting and sculpture, but photography and video dominate. Considering the varied national backgrounds of the participants, the ensemble looks and feels remarkably homogeneous. The reason is only partly thematic. What is feminism today? A lot of things, the show's title gingerly asserts. What is feminist art? The co-curators—the Sackler Center's curator Maura Reilly and the distinguished art historian Linda Nochlin (who helped organize a landmark exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Women Artists: 1550-1950," in 1976)—are chary of definitions. They discount the "essentialist" view, of women as a unitary and eternal species, which inspired Judy Chicago's vast, schmaltzy table with vagina-patterned place settings for mythical and historical heroines. Nor do they endorse the opposing opinion, advanced in a good deal of theory-driven art since the nineteen-seventies, that femininity is a socially tailored delusion. "Openness, multiculturalism, and variety are the names of the game," they write in their preface to the show's catalogue. They claim, for the art on display, only a shared "sense of *work as critique*, involving gender issues not necessarily overt but underlying." Feminist art is in the eye of the feminist, apparently. How to look at it in that way—winkling out "gender issues" with a rooting interest in their resolution—and simultaneously as art, an object of experience in and of itself, is not addressed. This kind of problem is not new.

COURTESY BROOKLYN MUSEUM

Frames from Boryana Rossa's video "Celebrating the Next Twinkling" (1999).

What really unifies "Global Feminisms," for a viewer, is the redolence of an almighty cultural agency that overleaps borders, blurs personalities, and purées ideas: the art school. Most of the artists embrace conceptualist strategies that have reigned as an academic lingua franca for three decades. Be they American, Egyptian, or Indonesian, the artists tend to hail from interchangeable sites of a pedagogical archipelago. They have studied some of the same forebears and have read (or been lectured to by people who have read) some of the same critical texts. Their works suggest mastery in the signal product of recent art education, which is, rather than art, the artist's statement. The impression given, of standard forms embodying tendentious sentiments, is Victorian: an international (or "transnational," the curators' favored term) regime of busy stasis. There is no disgrace in this. The show is an exercise in networking on behalf of artists who may or, in some countries, dramatically do face career disadvantages, or worse, because they are women. Accordingly, the prevailing institutional network is projected as a state of nature. The price paid is a jejune savor in presumptively radical gestures that recall past radical gestures and anticipate radical gestures to come, clickety-clack.

The titles of the show's four sections—"Life Cycles," "Identities," "Politics," and "Emotions"—broadcast what you're in for: respectively, bared bodies, jiggered clichés, protested abuses, and, well, emotions, variously angry and exuberant. The best artists help us forget where we are, even as they may snugly fit a category. My personal favorite is the Spanish performance artist Pilar Albarracín, who has two simple videos in "Identities." In one, she is a costumed flamenco singer, seated with a young male guitarist. They expertly render an impassioned plaint, at the end of which Albarracín stabs herself in the chest, releasing a gush of stage blood, and gets up and walks away. In the other, she is an elegant, taciturn woman in a canary-yellow coat and dark glasses, followed through the populous streets of Madrid by a brass band loudly playing a paso

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doble. She walks faster, then runs; the musicians stick with her. The implied commentary on conditions of womanhood in Spain is both cartoonishly obvious and, in its aesthetic power, exhilarating. Albarracín's specificity and economy expose, by contrast, the coyness and prolixity of much other work in the show. Also stirring is a video by the determinedly scurrilous young British art star Tracey Emin, who, in crosscuts, sitting on a couch, interviews herself, in the guises of a smart, stony skeptic excoriating an abject narcissist who—wielding cigarettes, a drink, and furious self-pity—is the Emin we know best. The work may be a minor sort of jape, but its funny, spooky intelligence stands out in an ambience of strained ambition.

The show's strongest suit is lumpen journalism documenting or, in an op-ed spirit, caricaturing worldly situations. (This points up one boon of the art-school franchise, as a cosmopolitan community building a common stock of information.) The German Julika Rudelius videos young Muslim men displaying new clothes and nattering about brands and prices, in the stereotypical way of mall girls. One man remarks that when married he will no longer care how he looks. The Iranian Parastou Forouhar's sprightly wallpaper drawings reveal figures, mostly female, being tortured or killed with whips, ropes, and stones. A Palestinian, Emily Jacir, uses a hidden camera to record her daily commute, on foot, past a sinister Israeli checkpoint. A video by the Israeli Sigalit Landau seems to accept guilt in this connection: naked on a beach, she twirls a hula hoop made of barbed wire, incurring bloody injury. (I wish she wouldn't.) The American Catherine Opie, who is a lesbian, mildly startles with a photograph of her beefy, tattooed self suckling her baby boy. A Serbian, Tanja Ostojic, exhaustively documents her successful Internet quest to acquire a husband with a European Union passport, so that she could live in Western Europe. (She and her prize, a German artist, have since divorced.) An installation by Michèle Magema, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, incorporates grainy black-and-white video footage of beautiful young people performing for the monumentally corrupt former ruler Mobutu Sese Seko, whose arrogant visage personifies a national catastrophe.

Arts of imagination, chiefly painting, come off badly, which might be deemed surprising at a time when many, if not most, of the freshest younger painters on the gallery scene happen to be women. The show includes only one big-name painter, the Briton Jenny Saville, who brings flashy painterly virtuosity to bear on grotesquely obese and tortured female nudes. (To my mind, Saville's technique and subject matter fight each other to an ultimately tedious draw.) The lack of painting, and of sculpture that isn't heavy-handedly themed, may reasonably reflect the curators' choice of feminist over merely female sensibility. But the major factor is a natural antagonism between school-rooted institutions and the commercial art world, in which an individual's success distances her from the ranks of collective purpose. The market selects art that people like to look at, whatever it may be about. This is bound to exasperate partisans of any particular aboutness, whose goal is not case-by-case approbation but blanketing justice. The conflict cannot be resolved, because the terms on the two sides—politics versus taste, virtue versus pleasure, aggrieved conviction versus disposable wealth—sail past each other. The agon's usual form is an assault, by the party of politics, on the complacency of art lovers. It draws force from the unexceptionable truth that justice is more important than artistic quality. Activists enjoin a suspension of fun-as-usual until urgently needed reforms are in place. In consequence, social movements are always aesthetically conservative (as the great Russian avant-garde of the revolutionary era learned, to its sorrow). They siphon off creative energies to pragmatic ends. Of course, no movement will admit the inferiority of its art. It will redefine the field to make pleasure appear to be at one with virtue. Many art lovers, for their part, like to imagine a socially salubrious tendency in their takings of joy. Both are wrong.

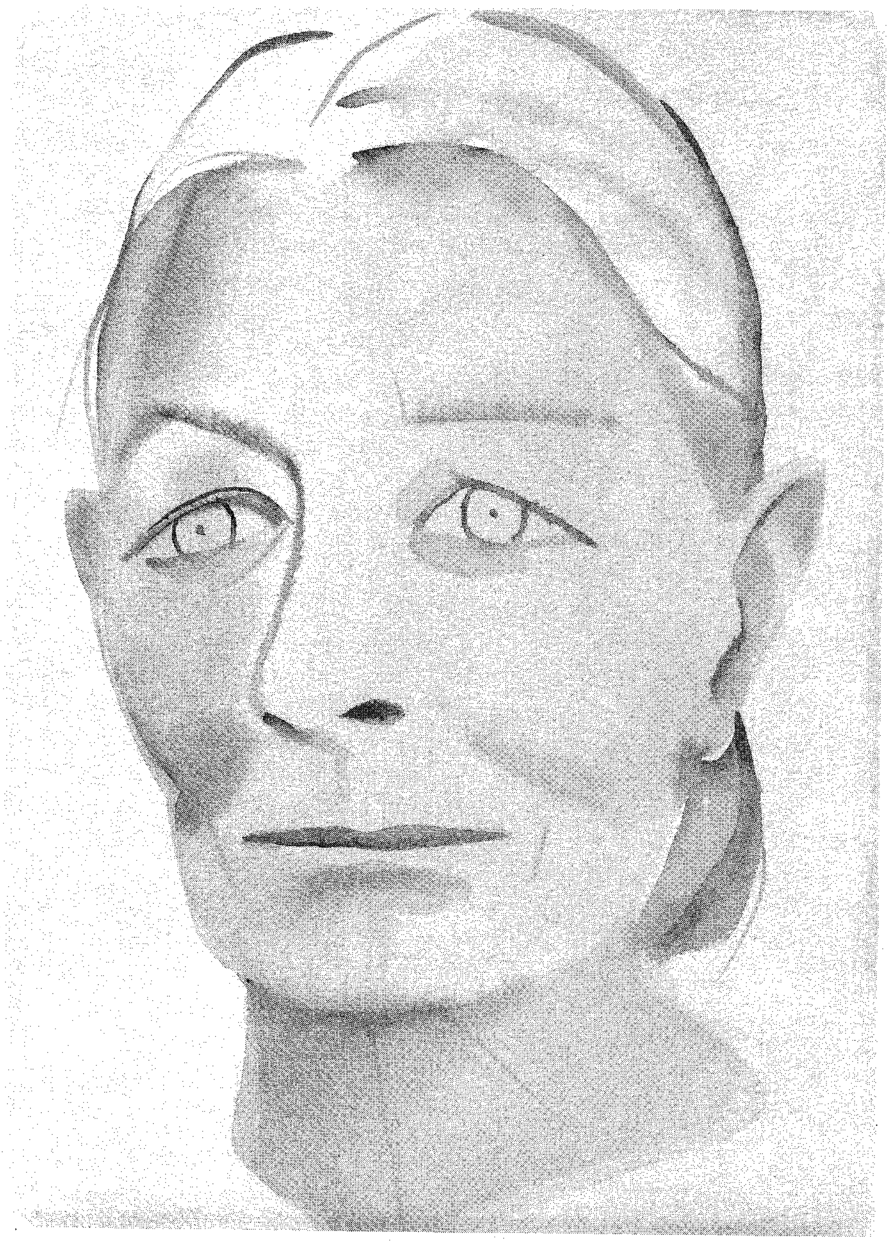
Genius and vileness can cohabit an artist's soul as comfortably as mediocrity and rectitude. The Sackler Center faces incommensurable choices: to advance what women corporately want or to promote what a gifted élite of women does. It will opt both ways, probably, with attendant anguished debate. ♦

THE THEATRE

DESIGNATED MOURNER

Joan Didion's "The Year of Magical Thinking."

BY JOHN LAHR



Vanessa Redgrave delivers a tragic story of loss and survival.

MATS GUSTAFSON

David Mamet, in his new volume of polemical mischief, "Bambi vs. Godzilla," coins the term "affliction drama" for the genre of entertainment that "enlists the human capacity for sympathy and asks the sympathetic to weep." Mamet calls this a "hijacking of the dramatic transaction," the theatrical equivalent of "bringing a gun to a knife fight." In such scenarios, human suffering trumps both dramaturgy and discourse. The intellectual blackmail implicit in these plays, Mamet argues, is: Do you appreciate this play, or do you hate blacks, the bereaved, the autistic? The latest example of this sort of theatrical buttonholing is "The Year of Magical Thinking" (directed by David Hare, at the Booth), Joan Didion's stage adaptation of her brilliant, best-selling memoir, a chronicle of the year following the unmooring loss of her husband, the writer John Gregory Dunne, in 2003, which she has updated for Broadway with the additional unbearable news of her daughter Quintana's death, two years later, at the age of thirty-nine. As tales of woe go, the Ancient Mariner has nothing on Ms. Didion, whose combination of lapidary prose and emotional control makes her a riveting, complex messenger of heartbreak and survival.

Taking a version of one's self on the road is an old, even venerable theatrical tradition. Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, Jack Johnson, and Muhammad Ali, for instance, have all broadcast their legends across the footlights; Didion, however, may be the first literary figure to put her recent and grievous personal losses onstage. As a playwright creating a one-woman show, her first obligation is to explain to herself and to us why she feels compelled to reiterate onstage a tragic tale that is already well known on the page. For a writer who takes pride in her emotional and literary punctilio ("There's a certain kind of personality—my own, maybe yours—that sets great store on seeing it straight," she says), Didion provides a strangely disingenuous answer, one that gets the evening off to a defensive, even false, start. "This happened on December 30, 2003," she begins. "That may seem a while ago but it won't when it happens to you. And it will happen to you. The details will be different, but it will happen to you. That's what I'm here to tell you. You see me on this stage, you sit next to me on a plane, you run into me at dinner. You know what happened to me. You don't think it could happen to you. That's why I'm here."

In this first breath, Didion establishes her stage character (played here by Vanessa Redgrave) as a sort of self-dramatizing doyenne of desolation. This whiff of condescension subverts the fetching frailty of Didion's literary persona. What felt like curiosity in the book becomes grandiosity on the stage; her grief must be attended to. "Nobody gets out of life alive," Tennessee Williams said. But Didion, in this misguided act of exhibitionism, seems to imply that she's got a lock on loss. More important, by telling the viewers how to identify with her story, she robs them of their work of discovery. Didion is not an unreliable narrator; on the contrary, she is a scrupulous, obsessive observer of the delirium that sometimes makes her act unreliably. As a result, there is no dramatic irony or tension in the theatrical exchange; there is only narration. Despite its billing, the show is not, in any meaningful sense of the word, a "play"; it's an exercise in eloquence, a sort of audiobook with backdrops—albeit a series of gorgeous bleached-gray-and-white seascapes, designed by the masterly Bob Crowley, which serve to punctuate the bleak and shifting emotional terrain of Didion's story.

Although the opening skews the monologue, it doesn't entirely spoil it. Once the narrative properly begins, it more or less follows the tracks and tropes of the book. (At one point, Redgrave even produces the book and reads from one of its best pages: "Grief turns out to be a place none of us know until we reach it.") Pain almost always renders us inarticulate; it wrecks thought and makes words impossible. Didion's achievement is to find those words. Her prose style—as she describes it, "a technique for withholding whatever it was I thought or believed behind an increasingly impenetrable polish"—is crystalline and always captivating. She is expert at playing her nervy persona against the sinew of her prose. The music of her simple sentences, her staccato rhythms, and her repetitions work the magic of both control and collapse. For instance, "I hear my own voice. What I hear it saying is this: 'He's dead, isn't he?' The doctor looks at the social worker. 'It's okay,' the social worker says. 'She's a pretty cool customer.'" The list of Didion's acute observations includes the clear bead she has on herself. Always an astute social observer, she sees her own foibles under pressure. "What was in my mind when I bought the blue cotton scrubs at the U.C.L.A. Medical Center bookstore?" she says, when she visits her daughter in the hospital after a brain hemorrhage. "Did it never occur to me that for the mother of a patient to show up at the hospital wearing blue cotton scrubs could only be construed as a suspicious violation of boundaries. Has my isolation become this profound?"

In the midst of her deracinating loss, Didion knows that her husband is dead and yet, at the same time, tries to keep him alive. This is the magical thinking she takes as her subject. Of her obsession with managing her husband's bicoastal obituaries, for instance, she writes:

> An obituary means he is dead.
>
> I am seized by the need not to let anyone at the Los Angeles *Times* read this in the New York *Times*. I call a friend at the Los Angeles *Times*. As he picks up I realize that I have made a mistake. It's still early in Los Angeles, is John even dead there? What time was it here when they said he was dead? Is it that time yet in Los Angeles? If there's time left on the West Coast, does it even need to happen there? Should I be taking him there right now? If I hang up and fly out can we have a different ending on Pacific time?

Reading Didion's subtle account of the dark tunnel she entered when Dunne died in his chair as she was preparing dinner is rather like watching a master surgeon stitch up her own heart.

In the translation from the page to the stage, however, there is an essential change of chemistry, as well as a new vulgarity. The reading experience, which is private, is about reflection; the theatrical experience, which is public, is about capitulation. Onstage, the words may be Didion's but the metabolism isn't. Watching the strapping, hot-blooded Redgrave try to embody Didion's birdlike, chilly character is rather like seeing a falcon impersonate a sparrow. Positioned center stage on a wooden chair, her silver hair pulled tightly back on her handsome head, Redgrave speaks to the audience pitched forward, with her arms mostly folded in front of her, her elbows neatly balanced on the armrests. She brings a physical charisma to the show that matches Didion's verbal one, pronouncing her lines at a manic clip not so much to avoid boredom as to avoid bathos, a triumph of pronunciation over revelation. Redgrave's long fingers grasp at the air; they cover her mouth; they even occasionally sweep across her large almond eyes to wipe away tears. Her American accent is wayward, but her compassion isn't. She is never more powerful than when delivering Didion's retrospective questions to her dead daughter. "Did I lie to you?" she says. "Did I lie to you all my life? When I said, You're safe, I'm here, was that a lie or did you believe it? Is a lie only a story that the hearer disbelieves? Is that the only definition of a lie? Or did you believe it?" Still, in Redgrave's attack, which is instinctively melodramatic, Didion's persona loses much of its tact and its camouflage, and a certain pretentiousness shows through. "You think I'm crazy," her voice hectors. "You *think* I'm *crazy* because otherwise I'm dangerous. Radioactive. If I'm sane, what happened to me could happen to you. You don't want to hear what I have to tell you."

Mourning is about achieving separation; writing down your sorrow, of course, can play a part in the long process of letting go. "We all know that if we are to live ourselves there comes a time when we must relinquish the dead, let them go, keep them dead," Didion says in the play, adding, "I knew that as the second year began and the days passed, my sense of John and Quintana, John and Quintana alive, would become more remote, softened, transmuted into whatever best served my life without them. In fact this is already happening." But is this true? By the end of the play, the statement seems almost delusional. The purpose of "The Year of Magical Thinking" is not to let go of Didion's lost loved ones—those faces that we see in a family portrait on the last backdrop at the finale—but to keep them alive, by planting them forcibly in the imagination of the audience. Like Kafka's Hunger Artist, who buys the spectators breakfast and watches them eat, Didion takes strength from retelling the story of her own deprivation. Far from signalling the end of her year of magical thinking, the play turns out to be an extension of it. ♦

DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT DEPARTMENT

From Professional Remodeler.

Last month's column about how Blackdog Builders delivers an exceptional customer experience, ended with the following quote from Blackdog president Dave Bryan: "[Customer satisfaction is] a million little things like that. It isn't building the addition. It's building the addition while delivering an experience that makes them feel upset and disappointed when you leave." Bryan wanted to make it clear that he meant that the customer was sad to see his crews finish the job and leave because they had enjoyed the remodeling experience Blackdog provided.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

IN DISGUISE

"Black Book" and "The Hoax."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Paul Verhoeven film, "Black Book," is set almost entirely in Holland during the later stages of the Second World War. It charts the efforts of a young Jewish woman named Rachel Stein (Carice van Houten) to survive and prosper. She hides out with a farmer's family, then teams up with her own relatives and tries to flee the country on a barge. They are betrayed and slaughtered; Rachel alone escapes, and joins the Dutch Resistance. Here she is allotted the task of seducing Ludwig Müntze (Sebastian Koch), the courteous, stamp-collecting head of the local Gestapo. How, one might ask, did he rise to his present position? Did he torture his suspects with a pair of philatelist's tweezers?

From here, the film is entwined in double crosses, strokes of luck, and panicky exchanges of gunfire. Somebody within the Resistance is in league with the Germans; for more than two hours, Verhoeven keeps us on what he believes to be tenterhooks before revealing the villain. By this stage, the war is over, with Allied troops being fêted in the streets and the unfortunate Rachel accused of collaboration. Her fate should hang in the balance, but, since the opening scene of the film shows her teaching in a kibbutz in 1956, the scales are decisively tipped.

According to rumor, "Black Book" marks a purified moment in the career of Paul Verhoeven. It is the first film that he has made in his native Holland in more than twenty years; it is also said to prove that he has put away childish things—"RoboCop," "Basic Instinct," "Showgirls," and the other baubles of his Hollywood years. The first inkling that this might not be so comes with the attack on the barge. Rachel, though shot in the head, swims to safety, with the wound diminishing swiftly to a nasty graze and, one scene later, to an unblemished brow. Such is the template to which Verhoeven cleaves: no suffering is so dire that it cannot be endured and then erased, to be replaced—in Rachel's case—with an indomitable smile. After her first encounter with Müntze, on a train (he offers to carry her bags, unaware that they are stuffed with weapons), she strolls away down the platform with a puff of relief on her lips.

Sebastian Koch and Carice van Houten in Paul Verhoeven's new movie.

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You could take this, I guess, as a convincing dramatization of courage. In Holland, as in other occupied countries, acts of resistance were carried out with exemplary coolness. A browse through Elsa Caspers's "To Save a Life: Memoirs of a Dutch Resistance Courier," published in 1995, confirms as much, and I suspect that Caspers was a useful source for Verhoeven and his co-screenwriter, Gerard Soeteman. "To Save a Life," however, is rooted in moral stamina and the harshness of deprivation; the winter of 1944 and the succeeding months (the time frame of "Black Book") saw the Netherlands besieged by famine, with people grating tulip bulbs to make soup. None of that desperation pinches Verhoeven's film. Resisters and collaborators alike are elegantly dressed, with plenty of flesh on the bones, and some of Rachel's escapades have the casual air of a spree.

This is not to diminish the brassy performance of Carice van Houten, whose cheeriness is tinged with a mania that recalls other Verhoeven blondes. To avoid detection, she bleaches not only her locks but her pubic hair, finely focussed groin-baring being the price of admission to the Verhoeven pantheon. The trouble with "Black Book" is that, in urging us to admire the resourcefulness of a character—a Jewish woman pretending to serve the Nazis—it hopes to cover up its own deceit. This is trash pretending to serve the cause of history: a "Dirty Dozen" knockoff with one eye on "Schindler's List." Everything about it, from the earnest strivings of the musical score to the beery gropings of the Germans, has the whiff of soap opera. At one point, the sanitization is literal: Rachel, arrested as a traitor, is stripped to the waist and drenched in human excrement. There may be grounds for showing such maltreatment, but there are none for what happens next—a shot of our heroine, scrubbed and untraumatized, leaving the scene with her rescuer, a Resistance friend, and walking out into the sunshine. Is that how Verhoeven thinks that individuals, let alone countries, emerge

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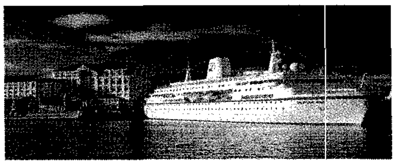

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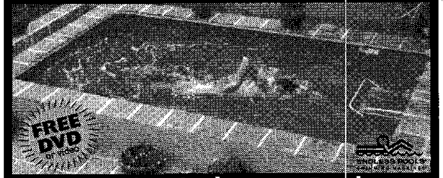

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from humiliation? Far from turning serious, the director of "Basic Instinct" has proved that, when it comes to grappling with good and evil, his instincts aren't basic enough.

On a related subject, can you swallow a Jewish Richard Gere? The question spills naturally from Lasse Hallström's film "The Hoax," which delves with such gusto into the mechanics (not to mention the ethics) of gullibility that by the end we are forced to ask: Who can tell the guller from the gulled? Clifford Irving—a true figure, still alive today—was an author of minor repute who in 1971 conceived a scam that, in its formal beauty, would surpass anything else to which he put his name. "I'm working on the most important book of the twentieth century," he declares, bursting into the offices of McGraw-Hill, in New York, to the annoyance of his editor, Andrea Tate (Hope Davis). Irving claims that he has been asked to research and prepare—in short, to write—the autobiography of Howard Hughes, a man whose public appearances are slightly less frequent, and less reliable, than Bigfoot's.

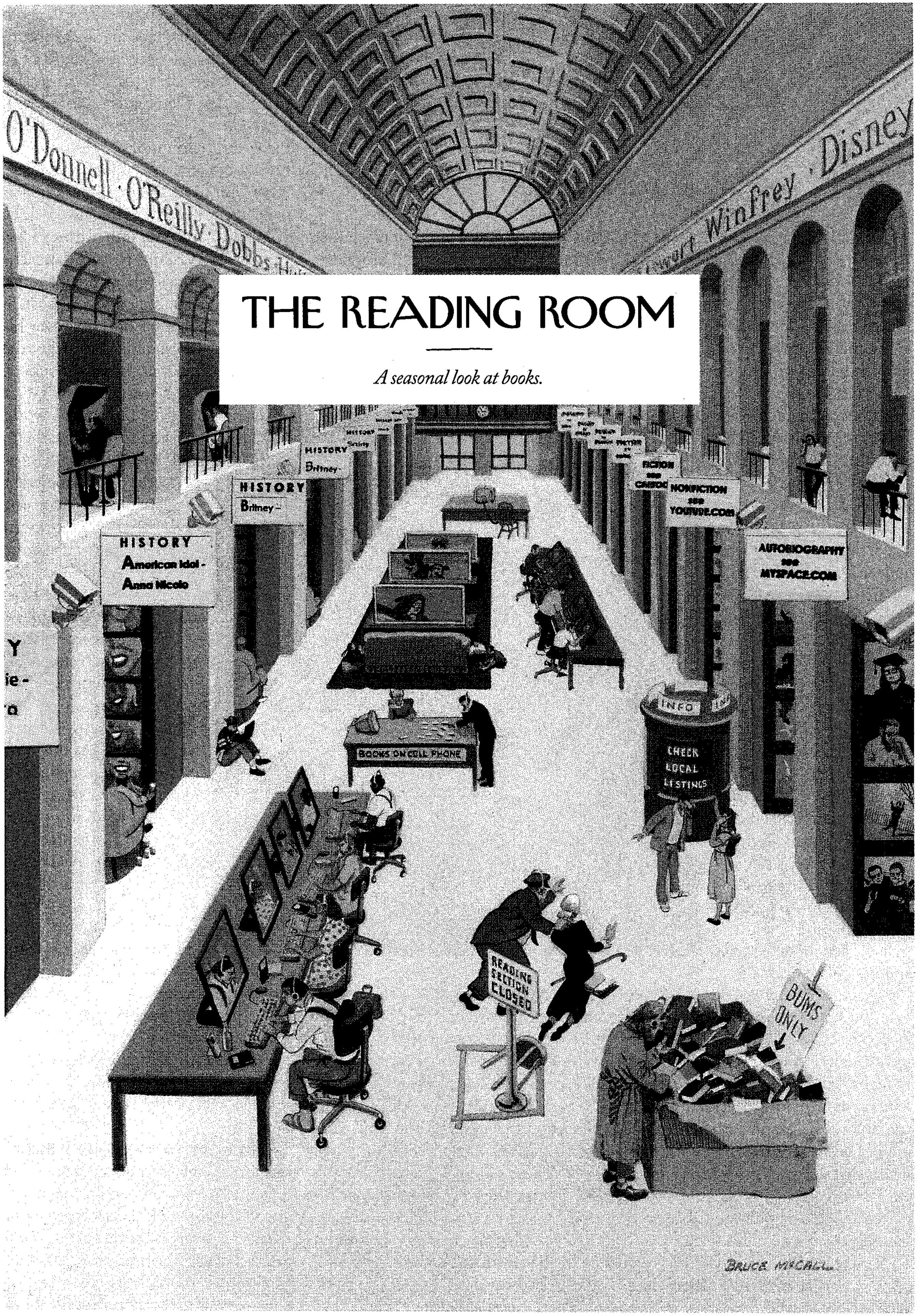
A likely story. So likely, in fact, that Andrea and her superiors, including the president of the company (Stanley Tucci), lunge at it with their tongues hanging out. As Irving says, "I handed them three yellow letters, they gave me half a million dollars. Is that plausible?" It was he, of course, who faked those letters, which purported to come from Hughes himself and suggested Irving as the right man for the job. The whole thing is a fix, dreamed up by Irving and his best friend, Dick Suskind (Alfred Molina), and the comic glee that enlivens the first half of "The Hoax" springs from their astonished realization that they might, by a whisker, get away with it. So sure is Hallström's pacing that you barely notice the withering moral of the tale: when the money is big enough, everyone is a mug.

"The Hoax" is a much smarter and more diverting picture than "The Aviator," which, for all its pizzazz, did the one dull and hollow thing that you can do with Howard Hughes: it bought his story, straight. It was a McGraw-Hill kind of movie, with a fancy cover. Hallström's effort, shot by Oliver Stapleton, is no less fun to ogle—check out the sofa covers, the textured wallpapers, and the resplendent pertness of Hope Davis in her kneecap-grazing dresses of 1971—but its writhing narrative, scripted by William Wheeler, pulls it away from Scorsese and closer to the tall, doubt-haunted stories of Jonathan Demme, whose "Melvin and Howard" (1980) offered Hughes as a mad old motorcyclist in the desert, and of Orson Welles, who took one look at Clifford Irving and pulled him out of the hat in "F for Fake" (1974). There, in interviews, we encountered the real Irving: sly, sociable, and dangerously sane. As Welles asked, going straight to the heart of the matter, "Does it say something for this age of ours that he could only make it big by fakery?"

Gere is a slippery customer, no question, and I heartily applaud his wig, but does he glow with the grandeur of the born charlatan? Tucci, say, might have done a more rambunctious job. As for Alfred Molina, he could have played almost any role in the movie; we first see him, for no good reason, in a wetsuit, and from then on he delivers a matchless portrayal of a rubber soul. As portly and hangdog as Charles Laughton, Molina's Suskind is breathlessly out of his depth, forever imagining extra hiccups and glitches to go with the real ones. "What if I'm a Russian?" he asks, approaching a security cordon at the Department of Defense. (Irving, shying from the dirty work, gets Suskind to steal a Hughes-related document.) Their kinship—wholly unsexual yet lit, like that of Martin and Lewis, with an exasperated love—is the beacon of the movie, and it just about survives the lengthening shadows of the later scenes. Hughes, sensing an opportunity, really *does* make contact with our bewildered hero, trying to use his book as a tool with which to jab at President Nixon. Suddenly, we are plunged into talk of Watergate and airline-industry deals, and the joy starts to drip from the movie, which cannot quite bear so much reality. Irving himself grows deluded and paranoid, like the John Nash of "A Beautiful Mind," but who wants another frowning film about conspiracy theories? Isn't it enough to make sport of the suckers who believe them? ◆

THE READING ROOM

A seasonal look at books.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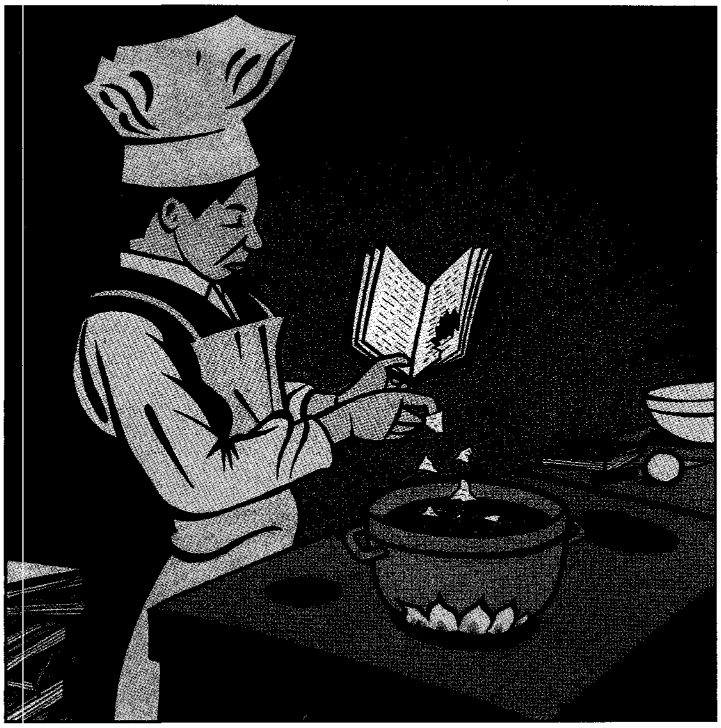
READINGS

COOKED BOOKS

Real food from fictional recipes.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Recently, there was an exchange in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* about the presence, and the propriety, of recipes in novels, and we intend to settle the questions that have arisen there in the American way, right now, and for good. There are four kinds of food in books: food that is served by an author to characters who are not expected to taste it; food that is served by an author to characters in order to show who they are; food that an author cooks for characters in order to eat it with them; and, last (and most recent), food that an author cooks for characters but actually serves to the reader.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY THIERRY GUITARD

Most books that have food in them, including the classic nineteenth-century novels, have the first kind of food. In one Trollope novel after another, three meals a day, the parsons and politicians eat chops or steaks or mutton, but the dishes are essentially interchangeable, mere stops on the ribbon of narrative, signs of life and social transactions rather than specific pleasures: "Mr. Peregrine greatly enjoyed his chop" or "For Dr. Patterson, even the usual satisfaction he took in his beefsteak and porter was somewhat diminished by this thought"—such food provides space for a moment of reflection. The dishes are the Styrofoam peanuts in the packaging of classic narrative. There are moments in Trollope when what a character *drinks* matters—claret good or bad, porter or port—but his food is, in every sense, at the service of his story.

Next come the writers who dish up very particular food to their characters to show who they are. Proust is this kind of writer, and Henry James is, too. Proust seems so full of food—crushed strawberries and madeleines, tisanes and champagne—that entire recipe books have been extracted from his texts. But he's not a greedy writer; that his people are eating lobster or veal matters to how they feel about who they are, but we are not meant to leave the page hungry. Proust will say that someone is eating a meal of *gigot* with sauce béarnaise, but he seldom says that the character had a *delicious* meal of *gigot* with sauce béarnaise—although he will extend his adjectives to the weather, or the view. He uses food as a sign of something else. (It's what social novelists, even mystically minded ones, always do: J. D. Salinger doesn't like food, either, but the fact that his characters are eating snails or Swiss-cheese sandwiches tells so much about them that it must be noted, and felt, like every other detail.)

Then, there are writers who are so greedy that they go on at length about the things their characters are eating, or are about to eat—serving it in front of us and then snatching it from our mouths. Ian Fleming is obsessed with food; gluttony, even more than lust, is the electric current of his hero's adventures. Newcomers to James Bond, imagining him to be the roughneck he has once again become in movies, will be startled to see how much time Bond spends, in "Casino Royale" and the other early Bonds, giving advice to his girls and his spy superiors on what to eat, with the author hovering over his shoulder as he examines the menu: the problem with caviar, Bond announces, is getting enough toast (not true); English cooking is the best in the world when it's good (certainly not true then); and rosé champagne goes perfectly with stone crabs (very true). His creator, one feels as the excitement builds, is not just itemizing the food, waiter-like, but actually sitting at the table and sharing it with him.

And then there are writers, ever more numerous, who present on the page not just the result but the whole process—not just what people eat but how they make it, exactly how much garlic is chopped, and how, and when it is placed in the pan. Sometimes entire recipes are included in the text, a practice that links Kurt Vonnegut's "Deadeye Dick" to Nora Ephron's "Heartburn," novels about the inadvertent mayhem that a man can inflict on a woman; in "Heartburn," the recipes serve both as a joke about what a food writer writing a novel would write and as a joke on novel-writing itself by someone who anticipates that she will not be treated as a "real" novelist.

These days, we have long cooking sequences in Ian McEwan; endless recipes in James Hamilton-Paterson; menus analyzed at length in John Lanchester; and detailed culinary scenes involving Robert B. Parker's bruiser of a detective, Spenser. Cooking is to our literature what sex was to the writing of the sixties

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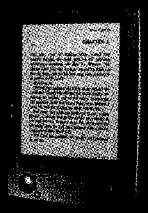

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and seventies, the thing worth stopping the story for to share, so to speak, with the reader.

Not long ago, I attempted to mimic some cooking as it is done in a number of relatively recent novels. I began, foolishly, with several recipes from Günter Grass's Nobel Prize-provoking "The Flounder," the epic allegory of German history told through the endlessly repeated parable of an evil fish, a gullible man, a virtuous woman, and a lot of potatoes. The talking Flounder, being both the evil daemon and the central consciousness of the piece, has a natural class interest in flounder's not being eaten, so there is a shortage of fish recipes in "The Flounder." (I was tempted by a detailed description of how to make stewed tripe, but who in my gang would eat stewed tripe?) There is one nice moment, though, when the eternal talking Flounder, who "knew all the recipes that had been used for cooking his fellows," mentions simmering the fish with white wine and capers. Well, from his mouth to our plate: I did just that, with a nice fillet from Citarella, and, as suggested, added some sorrel. Then, learning in a later section what could be done with potatoes and mustard—the potato, with its false promise of cheap nutrition for all, is, I suppose, meant to represent the false hope of the Enlightenment in Germany, but the mustard surely could represent the saving genius of the Bavarian rococo—I made a gratin with mustard to accompany it. It was fine, though it reminded me of why it is that, at a moment when Spanish cooking is everywhere sanctified and even English cooking, for the first time, canonized, not many people are making a case that German cooking is much more than fish and potatoes and sauerbraten. Eating Günter Grass's flounder was actually like reading one of his novels: nutritious, but a little pale and starchy.

Great masters are not meant to offer small plates. My eye fell next on "School Days," one of Robert B. Parker's excellent Spenser mysteries. Where John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee, Spenser's daddy in the genre, would occasionally throw an inch-thick T-bone on the grill of the Busted Flush, Spenser produces entire dishes, and we read about them bit by bit. (Nero Wolfe had a personal chef, and ate a lot, but it was mostly in the "the great detective dined on *quenelles de brochet*" line.) In "School Days," Spenser, with his beloved Susan away at a psych seminar, and only the dog for company, makes a dish of cranberry beans, diced steak, and fresh corn, dressed with olive oil and cider vinegar.

The beans alone establish Spenser's credibility as a cook. "I shelled the beans from their long, red-and-cream pods and dropped them in boiling water and turned down the heat and let them simmer," he tells us. A devotion to shell beans, I have noticed, divides even amateur cooks from non-cooks more absolutely than any other food, and they are, into the bargain, a perfect model of writing. Like sentences, shell beans are a great deal more trouble to produce than anyone who isn't producing them knows. You have to shell the beans, slipping open the pods with your thumbnail and then tugging the beautiful little prismatic buttons from their moorings—a process that, like writing, always takes much longer than you think it will. And then even the best shell beans, cleaned and simmered, are like sentences in that nobody actually appreciates them as much as they deserve to be appreciated. Shell beans are several steps more delicious, lighter and finer, than dried beans, much less canned beans; but the sad truth is that nobody really cares beans about beans, and not many eaters can tell the fresh kind from the dried, or even the canned.

I carried on with the recipe: Spenser takes a small steak from the refrigerator and dices it, sautés it, and then mixes it with the beans. I did this, and, honestly, I don't think it's a good idea. Maybe I didn't do it right—there is a certain lack of specificity about what kind of steak he's using and just how long he keeps it in the pan—but I found that my steak dried out when it was diced and cooked, and, anyway, didn't have enough salty punch to play off against the floury blandness of the beans. Sausage, not steak, is what's called for here. As for the corn, well, even off-season corn is pretty tasty mixed with oil and vinegar, and makes a good combo with the shell beans. It's a nice dish, worth interrupting the murders for.

Still, you have to wonder how well the food fits in the book. The purpose of the scene, after all, is not to teach a recipe but to paint a mood—to show the lonely Spenser as somehow more modern, broader in interests and resources, than lonely city detectives in fiction often are. What the reader recalls, though, is not the setting but the dish. Should the food come off the page onto the plate quite so readily, overwhelming the atmosphere, and does this indicate that there is something subtly off, nonfunctional, about the presence of elaborate food-making in fiction?

Rising to a higher level of culinary ambition, I went on to make, the following night, a fish-stew recipe, a kind of English bouillabaisse, from Ian McEwan's superb "Saturday": Henry Perowne, the central character, a neurosurgeon, cooks this elaborate dish as he watches television and broods on "monstrous and spectacular scenes." Henry, though confessedly inexpert, is a convincing home cook; he admits that he belongs to the chuck-it-in school, the hearty school of throwing ingredients together in a pot—he likes the "relative imprecision and lack of discipline." In the passage I was following, he makes a tomato-and-fish stock for his stew, and, at the same time, starts prepping the rest. He "empties several dried red chillies from a pot and crushes them between his hands and lets the flakes fall with their seeds into the onions and garlic," before adding "pinches of saffron, some bay leaves, orange-peel gratings, oregano, five anchovy fillets, two tins of peeled tomatoes." Then he takes some mussels from a string bag, throws those, with the skeletons of three skates, into a stockpot, and tips some Sancerre into the tomato sauce. Meanwhile, he readies monkfish, slicing tails into chunks, a few more mussels, and, finally, some clams and prawns. All the while, he is watching on a mostly muted television the run-up to the Iraq war—marchers in London, Colin Powell at the U.N.—and brooding on life in our time.

McEwan is obviously painting a picture of *l'homme bourgeois* as he is today, his hands filled with fish, his mind with intimations of terror. (McEwan really is serving this dish to his readers; a revised version of the recipe is right there on his Web site.) It's a tribute to McEwan's powers of persuasion that the scene would never work that

NOVEL DÉBUTS

Fieldwork, *by Mischa Berlinski (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24).* In a thickly plotted twist on the genre of aimless Americans seeking redemption abroad, Berlinski's freelance-journalist narrator (also named Mischa Berlinski) stumbles on the case of an anthropologist who killed herself in a Thai prison while serving a sentence for her inexplicable murder of a Christian missionary. Fascinated, Berlinski investigates the missionary and the anthropologist's shared interest in the spiritual and social life of a particular Thai tribal village, presenting an enormously detailed account of the village as if it were a history of real events. As a result, the murder-mystery plot recedes somewhat wanly into the background, but the book succeeds in evoking the quixotic appeal of both the anthropological and missionary enterprises—of documenting other cultures and of converting them.

The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, *by Dinaw Mengestu (Riverhead; $22.95).* Set mostly in a shabby storefront in a Washington, D.C., neighborhood undergoing the first stages of gentrification, this searing novel is narrated by Sepha Stephanos, an Ethiopian forced to flee his native country because of his involvement in student activism. Sepha passes the time watching his income slow to a trickle and drinking with two fellow-immigrants, Ken the Kenyan and Congo Joe. Their favorite game is to name an African dictator and come up with his nation and the year he seized power; Sepha notes that "no matter how many we name, there are always more, the names, dates, and years multiplying as fast as we can memorize them." The pattern of Sepha's days shifts abruptly when he is befriended by a white woman, renovating the house next door, and her daughter. The relationship brings further resonance to this study of expatriate loneliness and urban despair.

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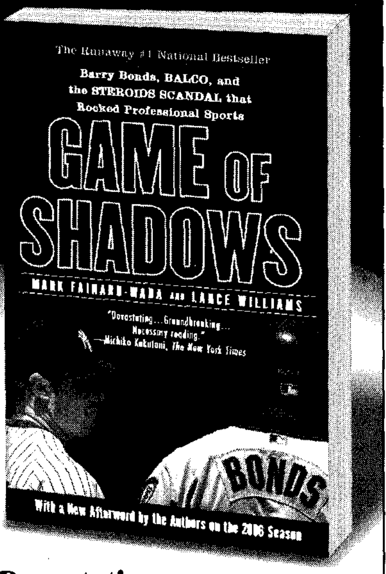

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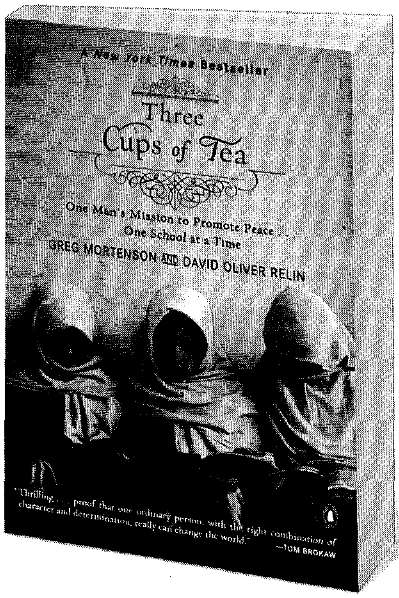
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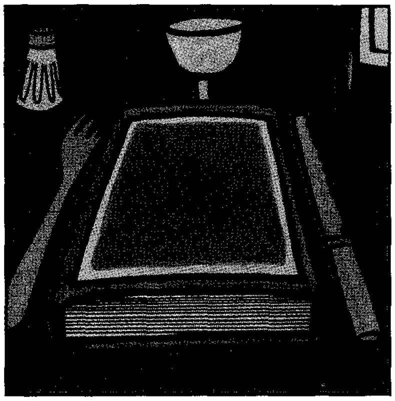
way in reality. You can't idly make a bouillabaisse while you brood on modern life any more than you can idly make a cassoulet; these are nerve-wracking concoctions. The mussels, which Henry drops into his stock straight from a string bag, need at a minimum to be spray-washed, and probably cleaned and checked for those obscene little beards they have. European mussels have fewer of these, it's true—more like soul patches. (Later on, Henry scrubs the mussels, but he seems to be doing it absent-mindedly, and you can't do it absent-mindedly.) The fish needs to be taken from its wrappings and washed; and then how fine do you chop the garlic, and are you sure the alcohol has boiled off from the wine? The "orange-peel gratings" are a story in themselves, since all the experts insist that you avoid getting any white pith in with them, and this is about as difficult as writing a villanelle. (It doesn't actually matter much, but they say that it does.) Worse than that, having crushed a "handful" of those little dried peppers between your fingers means that you have to wash your hands instantly, with soap, since nothing is more common among home cooks, like Henry, than wiping a tear from your eye while chopping the onions, your hand still contaminated by hot pepper, with horrific results.



While you are doing all this, I was reminded as I did it, you are thinking about the bouillabaisse, not about life in our time. Or, rather, you are not thinking about the bouillabaisse, or about anything: you are making the bouillabaisse. And here, I suspect, lies the difficulty with using cooking as the stock for the stream-of-consciousness stew. It is that the act of cooking is an escape from consciousness—the nearest thing that the non-spiritual modern man and woman have to Zen meditation; its effect is to reduce us to a state of absolute awareness, where we are here now of necessity. You can't cook with the news on and still listen to it, any more than you can write with the news on and still listen to it. You can cook with music, or talk radio, on, and drift in and out. What you can't do is think and cook, because cooking takes the place of thought. (You can daydream and cook, but you can't advance a chain of sustained reflections.)

The recipes in these books are not, of course, meant to be cooked; they have literary purposes, and one of them is to represent the background of thought. Every age finds an activity that can take place while a character is meditating; the activity surrounds and halos the meditation. In Victorian fiction, it is walking; the character takes a long walk from Little Tipping to Old Stornsbury and, on the way, decides to propose, convert, escape, or run for office. But the walk as meditational setting and backdrop came to an end with Joyce and Woolf, who made whole walking books. In recent American fiction, driving was recessive enough to do the job; in Updike and Ann Beattie, characters in cars are always doing the kind of thinking that Pip and Phineas Finn used to do on walks. Driving and walking, however, do seem to be natural "background" actions. But you cannot have characters thinking while cooking; the activity is not a place for thought but in place of thought.

We need these devices in books, because we do not, in life, think our thoughts over time. Since our real mental life is made in tiny flashes in the midst of our routines, we have to stretch it out, taffy-like, in literature to cover a span of time worthy of it. If we accurately represented our mental life as it takes place—

sudden impulses on the way to the washroom, a spasm of neurons unleashed over coffee—no one would believe it. Consciousness is not a stream but a still lock that suddenly drops into little waterfalls. The lengthy descriptions of cooking that we find in modern literature are a way of artfully representing, rather than actually reproducing, our mental life—a modelled illusion, rather than a snapshot of the thing.

So no matter how much cooking a novel contains, in the end it goes back to being a book, as all books will. Even cookbooks are finally more book than they are cook, and, more and more, we know it: for every novel that contains a recipe, there is now a recipe book meant to be read as a novel. When we read, in Alain Ducasse's recent Culinary Encyclopedia, a recipe for Colonna-bacon-barded thrush breasts, with giblet canapés, on a porcini-mushroom marmalade, we know that we are not seriously expected to cook this; rather, we are to admire, over and over, the literary skill, the metaphysical poetry, required to bring these improbable things together. You and I are not about to cook thrush breasts with a porcini-mushroom marmalade—Alain Ducasse is not about to cook them, either—any more than we are about to throw ourselves under the train with Anna or sleep with Madame Bovary.

The secret consolation may be that it works the other way around as well. The space between imaginary food in books and real food is the space where reading happens. The people we encounter in novels are ultimately mere recipes, too—so many eyes, so many bright teeth, so many repeated tics and characterizing mannerisms—and we accept that we cannot perfectly reproduce them, either. Our mental picture of Henry Perowne, like our mental picture of Lady Glencora Palliser, is as hard-won as the bouillabaisse from "Saturday," as vague in critical aspects and as likely to vary from maker to maker, from reader to reader. (The characters in Flaubert are like the recipes in Escoffier; we are surprised to see how much is left out.) We read about Cabourg in Proust, and are unprepared for what we find when we actually get there. The act of reading is always a matter of a task begun as much as of a message understood, something that begins on a flat surface, counter or page, and then gets stirred and chopped and blended until what we make, in the end, is a dish, or story, all our own. ♦

NOVEL DÉBUTS

The Raw Shark Texts, *by Steven Hall (Canongate; $24).* Eric Sanderson wakes up amnesiac, without an identity, but gradually discovers that he is the second iteration of another Sanderson, the First, who clues in his successor through a series of artfully organized letters composed before his death. The Second Sanderson soon learns the bizarre truth: a "conceptual" shark—depicted graphically in the book as a fish-shaped bundle of text—devoured the First by feeding on his memory. The rest of Hall's ambitiously conceived but irritatingly self-serious novel concerns Sanderson's "Jaws"-like quest to put an end to the shark before it eats him, punctuated by a stock romantic plot and pictorial games that include a flip-book shark attack. Oddly, given all the textual high jinks, Hall's weakness for ending chapters on cliffhangers suggests that his book may actually wish it were a film.

The Secret of Lost Things, *by Sheridan Hay (Doubleday; $23.95).* Recently orphaned and almost penniless, eighteen-year-old Rosemary Savage arrives in New York from Tasmania clutching a Huon-pine box containing her mother's ashes, a remembrance of one of the many lost things in this intricate literary mystery. She gets a job at a mammoth used bookstore where review copies occupy the basement, or "hell," and rare volumes the fifth floor, or "heaven," and where the only cataloguing system is the collective memory of the store's oddball employees. The narrative picks up speed when Rosemary becomes interested in the possible discovery of a Melville novel that was supposedly lost in a fire in 1853. As she unravels the mystery, Hay interpolates passages by Melville, Auden, and Borges, skillfully using them to illuminate both the significance of the lost text and her heroine's interior journey.

THE TYPING LIFE

How writers used to write.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Many of the early inventors of the typewriter thought that what they were inventing was a prosthetic device for the blind. Why would ordinary writers need a writing machine? They had pens. Eventually, it became clear that such a mechanism could benefit the seeing, too, but, as we find out in "The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting" (Cornell; $29.95), by Darren Wershler-Henry, a professor of communication studies in Ontario, almost two centuries, roughly the eighteenth and the nineteenth, passed before that hope was realized. There was no single moment of discovery, no lone inventor crying "Eureka!" in a darkened laboratory. On the contrary, historians estimate that the typewriter was invented at least fifty-two times, as one tinkerer after another groped toward a usable design. One early writing mechanism looks like a birthday cake, another like a pinball machine. One was almost eight feet tall; another, a Tyrolean entry, was whittled largely from wood. Until about the eighteen-thirties, all typewriters lacked a keyboard, and when they got one it was usually modelled on that of the piano. Nor did they have a ribbon. That didn't make its appearance until 1841; in most earlier ma-

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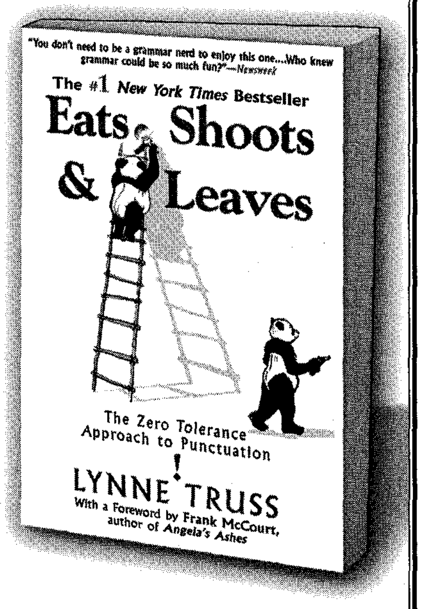
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chines the keys were inked by rollers or carbon paper.

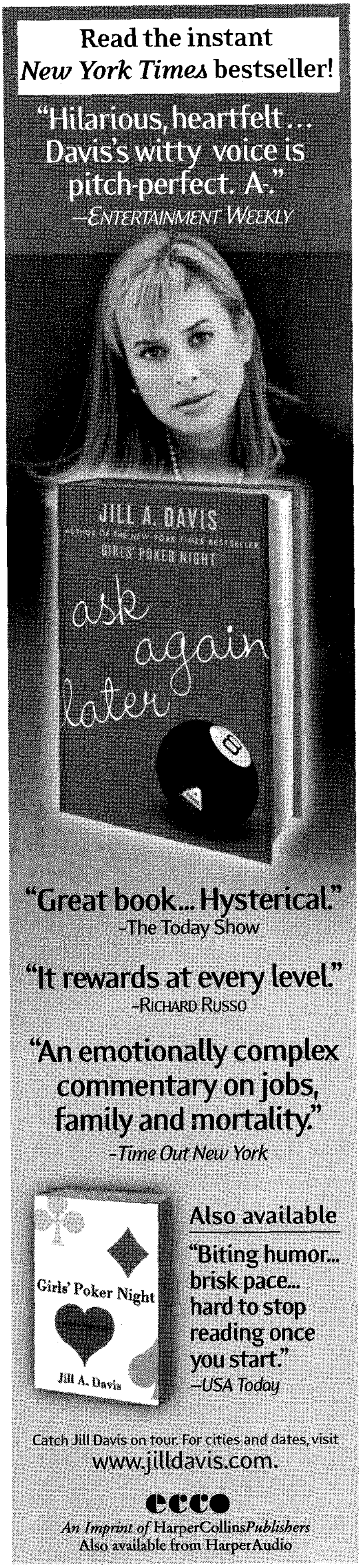
As with all inventions, however, people want to know who the "father" was, and that title is usually awarded to Christopher Latham Sholes, from Milwaukee. It is strange and pleasing that a machine famed for its cold efficiency issued from the hands of this modest and distracted man. ("He wore battered hats," one historian says. "His trousers were inches too short.") Sholes was apparently trying to invent a mechanical paginator—a device that would number the pages of a document sequentially—when he read an article on the typewriter in *Scientific American* and switched to that instead. The design he came up with was in many ways no better than previous ones, and he had little part in the typewriter's later history. He soon disowned the machine—refused to use one or even to recommend its use. Nevertheless, his model was the first to be successfully marketed. In the eighteen-seventies, the arms manufacturer E. Remington & Sons was looking for a new product line; the Civil War was over, and rifles were less in demand. Sholes's typewriter seemed a good bet. In 1873, Remington put it on the market, attached to a sewing-machine table, and made a bundle.

Sholes was also the author of the so-called QWERTY keyboard, which, with a few modifications, is still in use on our personal computers. (Look at the top row of your letter keys.) A problem with early typewriters was that the key arms kept getting stuck together. As the arm of the letter that had just been typed was falling back into place, it would jam against the arm rising to type the next letter, and the typist would have to stop and pry them apart. Reportedly, Sholes's partner delegated his son-in-law, the superintendent of schools for western Pennsylvania, to draw up a list of the most common two-letter sequences in the English language. Sholes then designed the keyboard so that these pairs were separated, thus introducing a tiny delay between the activation of one letter and the next. Wershler-Henry quotes an early history of the typewriter, Bruce Bliven's "The Wonderful Writing Machine," to the effect that the QWERTY keyboard was in fact "considerably less efficient than if the arrangement had been left to chance." Nevertheless, people got used to it, and it was never replaced.

Wershler-Henry follows the fortunes of the typewriter into the twentieth century, with special emphasis on the role of women in the story. In the beginning, few people imagined that anyone would compose at the machine. The user of the typewriter would be an amanuensis—in other words, a secretary—taking dictation from another person. Accordingly, in the early days the word "typewriter" was used to mean not just the machine but the person plying it. That person, the Remington folks assumed, would be a woman. (The flowers printed on the casing of the early models were to make the mechanism seem friendly to the weaker sex.) Remington's prediction was correct. It was often as typists that women poured into the professional workforce at the turn of the century. By 1910, according to the Census Bureau, eighty-one per cent of professional typists were female. Guardians of the social order warned that this development would have baleful consequences. It would unsex women; it would spell the end of the American family. They were right, in part. Together with other social changes, the availability of typing jobs no doubt did weaken the family's hold on women. As for unsexing them, the effect was the opposite. Wershler-Henry documents the entry of the "typewriter girl" into the iconography of early-twentieth-century pornography. He also gives us illustrations, from the so-called Tijuana Bibles, dirty comic books produced in Mexico, starting in the nineteen-thirties, for the American market. In one panel, a three-piece-suited executive, staring at his secretary's thigh, says, "Miss Higby, are you ready for—ahem!—er—dictation?" Such a situation did not lead swiftly to Miss Higby's empowerment, but for a woman to have a job, any job, outside the home was part of the humble beginnings of twentieth-century feminism.

Wershler-Henry covers these matters in the first half of his book. But he is a scholar of the postmodern persuasion, and, as he soon tells us, his interest is not in the typewriter's history but in its "discourse." In the postmodern vocabulary, this means the web of assumptions that collect around a cultural fact, with heavy emphasis on notions that have been unmasked as naïve and ridiculous by French theorists. The names of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard come up frequently in the book, and Wershler-Henry has a couple of propositions, consistent with those men's theories, that he wants us to agree with. First, he says, in the age of the typewriter—the twentieth century, more or less—there was a mythology that what was typewritten was *true*, that the machine somehow caused writers to bare their souls. This is a central idea of "The Iron Whim," and it calls forth some of Wershler-Henry's most atmospheric prose: "The typewriter has become the symbol of a non-existent sepia-toned era when people typed passionately late into the night under the flickering light of a single naked bulb, sleeves rolled up, suspenders hanging down, lighting each new cigarette off the smouldering butt of the last, occasionally taking a pull from the bottle of bourbon in the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet." Wershler-Henry's second big point is that people believed that what was typewritten was dictated, by a voice separate from the person typing; even people composing at the typewriter thought they were receiving dictation from elsewhere. Both these ideas are surprising—furthermore, they seem to contradict each other—but Wershler-Henry never really tries to prove them or reconcile them. He just asserts them, repeatedly. Never mind. They make him think of good stories to tell us about the typewriter.

Nietzsche used a typewriter. This is hard to imagine, but in the effort to stem his migraines and his incipient blindness—symptoms, some scholars say, of an advanced case of syphilis—he bought one of the new contraptions. So did Mark Twain, and he was the first important writer to deliver a typewritten manuscript, "Life on the Mississippi," to a publisher. Henry James also had a typewriter, and a secretary, to whom he dictated. That is a famous fact; it is said to have contributed to the extreme complexity of James's late-period style. (But why would oral composition make a writer's prose more complex, rather than more simple? Again, Wershler-Henry



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does not address the question.) James got used to the sound of his Remington; when it was in the repair shop and he had to use a loaner, the new machine's different sound drove him crazy. For many years after his death, his devoted typist, Theodora Bosanquet, claimed that she was still receiving dictation from him. Indeed, through her spirit medium she was informed that Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, and John Galsworthy, all as dead as James, also wanted to use her stenographic services.

Wershler-Henry tells us about William S. Burroughs, who wrote in certain of his novels—and may have believed—that a machine he called the Soft Typewriter was writing our lives, and our books, into existence. We also hear about Jack Kerouac, who typed "On the Road" on a roll of paper so that the job of changing the paper would not interrupt him and thrust him back into the world's inauthenticity. Kerouac was a fast typist—a hundred words a minute. Two weeks after starting "On the Road," he had a single single-spaced paragraph a hundred and twenty feet in length. Scholars disagree as to whether the scroll was shelf paper or a Thermofax roll or sheets of architect's paper Scotch-taped together. As with Burroughs, Kerouac's relationship to the typewriter was heavily mediated by drugs. He would buy nasal inhalers, pry them open, and eat the Benzedrine-soaked paper within, followed by a chaser of coffee or Coca-Cola. Don't run to the drugstore. They've changed the formula.

Wershler-Henry does not confine himself to human users of the typewriter. He also tells us about monkeys, as in the hypothetical question "If you put a bunch of monkeys in front of typewriters, how long would it take them to compose the works of Shakespeare?" This question originated as part of the theory of probability, and it has been tested. According to Wershler-Henry, the world record for Shakespeare-reinvention belongs to the virtual monkeys supervised by Dan Oliver, of Scottsdale, Arizona. On August 4, 2004, after the group had worked for 42,162,500,000 billion billion monkey years, one of Oliver's monkeys typed, "VALENTINE. Cease toIdor:eFLP0FRjWK78aXzVOwm)-';8.t . . .," the first nineteen characters of which can be found in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." Runner-up teams have produced eighteen characters from "Timon of Athens," seventeen from "Troilus and Cressida," and sixteen from "Richard II." Did these monkeys get federal funding?

Wershler-Henry discusses canine typists as well. In the nineteen-sixties, Elisabeth Mann Borgese, a daughter of Thomas Mann, trained her English setter, Arlecchino, to type with his nose on a specially constructed electric typewriter. After about a year, and many dispensations of raw hamburger, Arli could type twenty simple words. He made a lot of typos, though, and when Borgese tried to induce him to record his own thoughts, without dictation, he got discouraged and started smacking the machine with his paw. Borgese sent some sheets of Arli's typing to a poetry critic, who wrote back that the dog had "a definite affinity with the 'concretist' groups in Brazil, Scotland, and Germany."

It is a shame that Wershler-Henry, so willing to generalize about our experience with the typewriter, does not spend much time on the difference between that and our relationship to the personal computer. Consider, for example, our *physical* involvement with the typewriter, which stands in relation to our connection with the P.C. as a fistfight does to a handshake. On the P.C., we use the same typing skills that we used on the typewriter, but the contact is not the same. We run our fingers lightly over the keys, making a gentle, pitter-patter sound. On the typewriter, by contrast, we had to stab, and the machine recorded our action with a great big clack. We liked that. (As Wershler-Henry tells us, a silent typewriter was put on the market in the nineteen-forties, and nobody wanted it.) The noise told us that we had achieved something. So, in larger measure, did the carriage return—another line done!—and the job of changing the paper—another page done!

Which brings us to the white page. Mallarmé spoke of the uncertainty with which we face a clean sheet of paper and try, in vain, to record our thoughts on it with some precision. As long as we were

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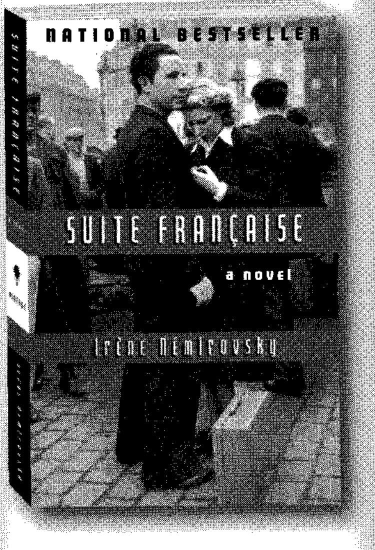

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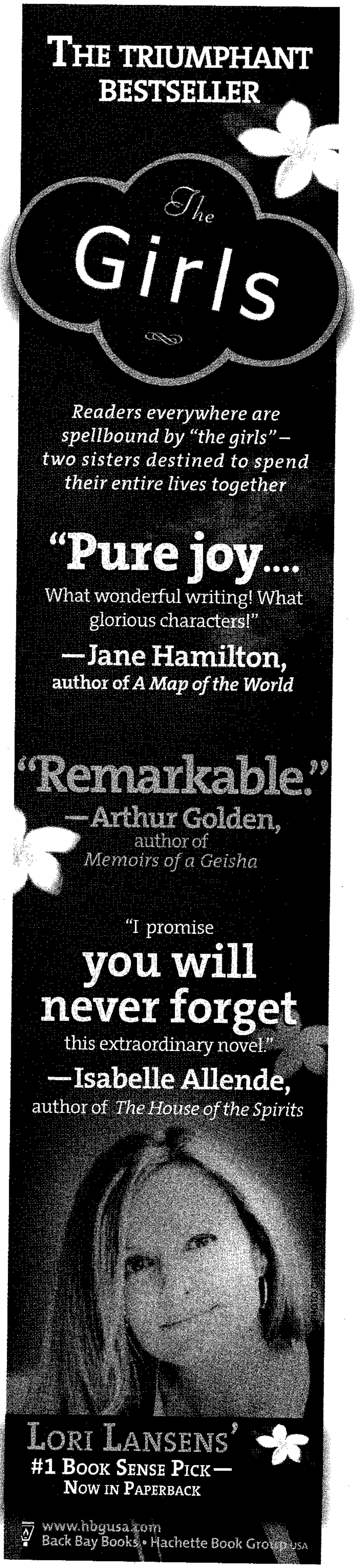
feeding paper into a typewriter, this anxiety was still present to our minds, and was revealed in the pointillism of Wite-Out, or even in the dapple of letters that were darker, pressed in confidence, as opposed to the lighter ones, pressed more hesitantly. A page produced on a manual typewriter was like a record of the torture of thought. With the P.C., the situation is altogether different. The screen, a kind of indeterminate space, does not seem violable in the same way as the page. And, because what we write on it is so effortlessly and undetectably erasable, the final text buries the evidence of our struggle, asserting that what we said was what we thought all along. Wershler-Henry suggests that the P.C.—with some help from Derrida and Baudrillard—ushered us into a world in which the difference between true and false is no longer cause for doubt or grief; falsity is taken for granted. I don't know if he was thinking about the spurious perfection of the computer-generated page, but it would be a useful example.

Something else to think about is the effect that the computer, with its astonishing capabilities, has had on us as writers. Take just one example: the ease of moving a block of text. Highlight, hit control X, move cursor, hit control V, and, presto, that paragraph is in a new place. Of course, we were able to move things in typewritten text, too, but all that business with the scissors and the tape made us think twice, and maybe it was wise for us to hesitate before changing the order in which our brains produced our thoughts. In recent years, I have read a lot of writings that seemed to say, "This paragraph is here because it seemed an O.K. place to shove it in." Furthermore, by allowing us to move text easily, computers influence us to write in movable units. In the novel that won Britain's Booker Prize last year, Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss," there is a line space, indicating a break of thought, every three pages or so. In "The Iron Whim," the average chapter length is eight pages, and much of the book is simply a miscellany, a collection of anecdotes. (The subtitle, "A Fragmented History of Typewriting," is accurate.) This gives it a light, less-holy-than-thou tone, in the manner of much postmodern scholarship. "I don't trust

STORY DÉBUTS

Karma, *by Rishi Reddi (Harper Perennial; $12.95).* Each of the stories in this startlingly mature collection shows first- and second-generation Indian-Americans attempting to manage the disconnect between cultures. The premise is hardly a new one, but Reddi's understated prose and her choice of detail give her revelations a quiet power. A meek housewife is able to challenge her husband after seeing a three-hundred-and-fifty-year-old bonsai; a retired judge is slighted by a fast-food worker, and almost ends a lifelong friendship as a result. Reddi's nuanced handling of her characters' anxieties shows the delicate paradoxes that the children of immigrants face: "They thought that every opportunity was waiting for them, careers, travel, love, the world; their parents had told them that's why they'd moved. . . . But in the end, the talons of tradition would close in."

Home Remedies, *by Angela Pneuman (Harcourt; $14).* In these eight carefully wrought stories, set mostly in Kentucky, an exorcism is performed in the basement of a Methodist church, a teen-ager becomes convinced that she is "history's second pregnant virgin," a divorced father returns from a trip to Jerusalem under the impression that he is a prophet, and an elderly churchwoman performs home surgeries with a bottle of Jim Beam and an ice pick sterilized on a kitchen stove. Pneuman shrewdly probes the dark underside of idealized emotions like faith, frequently employing adolescent narrators to reveal adults' hypocrisy. This leads to some repetition—there is a surfeit of selfish fathers and abandoned mothers. But her cool appraisals and meticulous plotting suggest insights that will only deepen as she turns to grownup perspectives.



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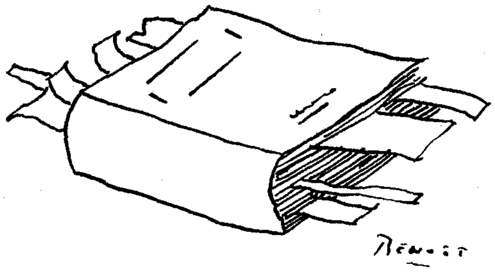

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any idea of truth," Wershler-Henry seems to say, "and I'm not going to pretend to."

But in the cool climes of the book there is one burning ember, and that is the notion that typewriters made writers feel they were being dictated to. Wershler-Henry returns to this idea again and again. He says that not only Burroughs but also Paul Auster and others felt haunted, controlled, by their typewriters. This makes sense, if only as a modern version of an ancient poetic theory. (The muse spoke to Virgil; the nightingale spoke to Keats; the typewriter spoke to us.) It may also be a species of wish-fulfillment. Most writers don't know where their ideas come from, or whether they are any good, really. How nice, then, to imagine that they were produced by some independent agency, which, if rather spooky, seemed to know what it was doing. In all this, however, I think that an important factor is the sheer sound of the typewriter, that reiterative click-clack. In his catalogue of typewriter-haunted authors, Wershler-Henry leaves out one interesting example, the heroine of Muriel Spark's first novel, "The Comforters" (1957). This woman, Caroline, a literary critic, has recently converted to Catholicism (as did Spark), and she is undergoing a sort of religious crisis. One night, she is wondering whether something she did will offend her friend Helena:

> On the whole she did not think there would be any difficulty with Helena.
>
> Just then she heard the sound of a typewriter. It seemed to come through the wall on her left. It stopped, and was immediately followed by a voice remarking her own thoughts. It said: *On the whole she did not think there would be any difficulty with Helena.*

Soon, this is happening all the time. Spark writes a sentence, then Caroline hears a voice saying the same sentence, together with the sound of a typewriter. This, of course, is an excellent way of casting the narrative into modernist "reflexivity," spotlighting the inventor behind the illusion. But, as Caroline's experience is repeated, it doesn't so much de-realize the novel as make it more real—a transcript of spiritual experience. Caroline's sense that her story is being written as she lives it becomes an analogue of the old problem of predestination versus free will, and the click-clack of the typewriter becomes the pulse of fate, like the ticking of a clock or the pounding of Poe's tell-tale heart. How we wish it would stop! And if it stops we're dead. The typewriter fed into that story. Now that it's gone, what will writers think up to make their lives exciting? ◆

BLOOD ON THE BORDERS

Crime fiction from all over.

BY CLIVE JAMES

If you've spent a couple of years being unable to get past the opening chapter of one of the later novels of Henry James, it's hard to resist the idea that there might be a more easily enjoyable version of literature: a crime novel, for example. After all, quite a few literary masterpieces spend much of their turgid wordage being almost as contrived as any crime novel you've ever raced through. On page 13 of my edition of "The Wings of the Dove," Kate Croy is waiting for her father to appear: "He had not at present come down from his room, which she knew to be above the one they were in." But of course she knew that, knew it so well that she wouldn't have to think about it; she is thinking about it only so that she can tell us. If a narrative is going to be as clumsy as that, can't it have some guns?

It's been a long time since Sherlock Holmes cracked his first case, and by now every country in the world must have at least one fictional detective with half a dozen novels to his name. Some countries seem to have a dozen detectives with twenty or thirty novels each. We long for these sleuths to be surrounded by classy prose, like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, so that we

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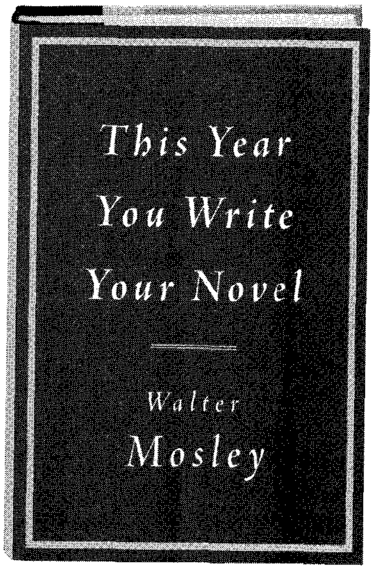

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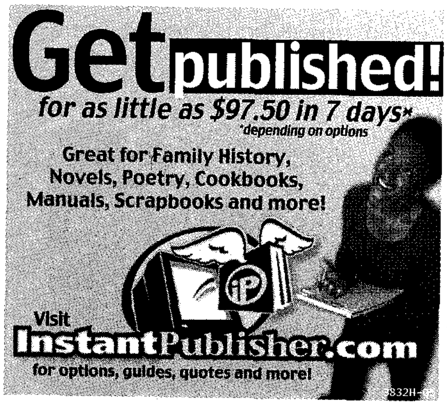
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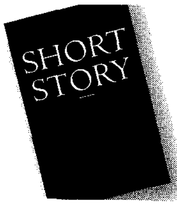

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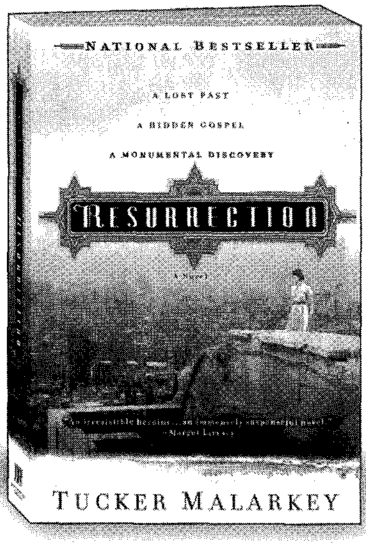

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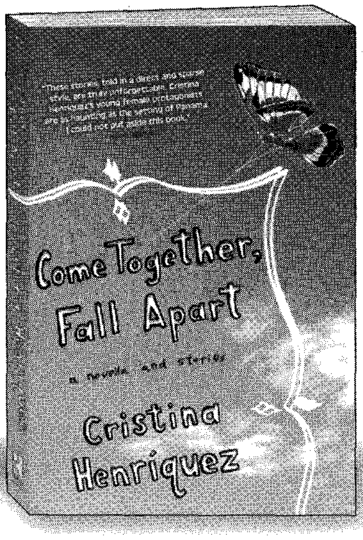

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can get the art thrill and the thriller thrill at once. *Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean.* Great idea, great sound, great sociological significance. But above all an eventful narrative to make you read on. Something unputdownable, to make you feel better about dreaming of ways to enliven the unpickupable: "Kate Croy looked at the fully dressed but headless corpse hanging from the ceiling fan and realized with a surge of fear that, unless there was another equally well tailored man with the same cufflinks, this was her father."

If the author does that kind of stuff well enough, he starts counting as literature. In the European languages, there were many famous fictional crime fighters after the demise of Sherlock Holmes, but it was Georges Simenon, Maigret's prolific inventor, who really gave the modern crime novel its aspirations to seriousness. Helping to fuel the aspiration, but hindering its fulfillment, is the familiarity provided by a recurrent detective hero. There had always been a space-warp area in which gifted writers wrote noir books that hovered trembling between thrills and thoughtfulness, but without a star detective the gifted writers had trouble writing enough of them, and one of the imperatives of the genre-fiction business is that you must publish enough books to survive in a market where everybody else is publishing a lot of books for the same reason. It helps to have your own sleuth and to get people hooked on him. Simenon, with the organization and instincts of a Colombian drug runner, got the whole world hooked on Maigret.

Not only did Maigret sell by the million in every tongue and in all media; literary critics praised his author's stripped-down style. Though it could be said that the style was stripped-down because Simenon was essentially styleless—he *said* that he spent hours taking out the adjectives, but he also said that he was irresistible to women—the Maigret novels acquired such prestige that Simenon's action novels without Maigret in them started counting as proper novels, the absence of the star turn being thought of as a sign of artistic purity.

Most genre writers can be counted on to covet the tag of seriousness, even when they profess to despise it. Soon a new, specially commissioned novel by the Edinburgh author Ian Rankin will be serialized in the New York *Times Magazine*. But apparently Rankin's famous Inspector Rebus won't be in the story. Interviewed by the *Independent* about this startling act of self-abnegation, Rankin sounded the way Fred Astaire did when he suggested that his forthcoming appearance in "On the Beach" would be a heaven-sent opportunity not to dance.

For Rankin's fans all over the world, Rebus is the ideal sleuth: a maverick (of course) cop who drinks so hard that he gets another hangover from inhaling his current hangover, he keeps his job only by the kind of deductive brain that can operate even when bombed. (In Britain, he is played on television by Ken Stott, with a magnificently burred accent and a rack of luggage beneath each eye.) Rebus, who looks and sounds like a man who has slept under a horse, will be a big absence from this new story. But the new story will still be set in Edinburgh, which has the advantage of offering, along with plenty of classical architecture, an infinite number of dank staircases leading down into squalid areas where Rankin's sleuth can find bodies in even worse condition than his own. Other Scots detectives operate in the less ambiguous setting of

Glasgow, where far fewer classical outlines have survived to frame the rough stuff. To indicate that they are not pampered, the actors who play the Glasgow flatfeet on television say "murghder" instead of "murder." With throats that hurt from the accent, and teeth chipped from being gritted, Glasgow investigators are tougher. But Edinburgh *looks* better, and the significance of this fact may be a clue to how the genre is evolving.

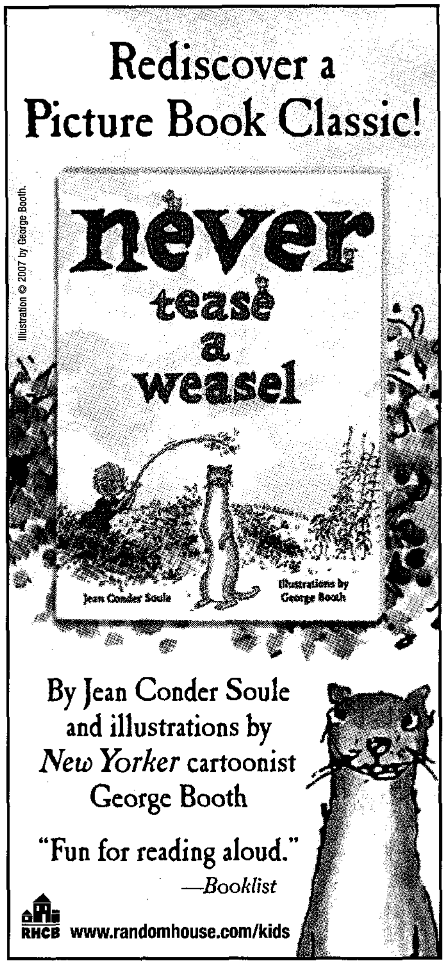
It took a long time for the *roman policier* to run through all its possible variations of plot and character. The constant advance of technology has provided new ways to stash the corpse (in the foundations of the nuclear power plant) and to track down the culprit (after the fingerprints and the phone-bill paper trail came the credit-card account, the heat signature, the carbon footprint). We've had increasing numbers of women detectives and the emergence of the female coroner. But, finally, there are only so many storylines and patterns of conflict. The only workable solution has been to shift the reader's involvement from the center to the periphery: to the location. In most of the crime novels coming out now, it's a matter not of what happens but of where.

Essentially, they are guidebooks. That's why a maverick detective from Edinburgh outranks a maverick detective from Glasgow, and why even Elmore Leonard, who can get so much out of a small American city whose main drag consists almost entirely of franchises—some of which, admittedly, come equipped with a body in the Dumpster out back—still gravitates toward Los Angeles as the natural stomping ground of Chili Palmer. Ideally, an author should turn out a sequence of detective novels that will generate a bus tour in the city where they are set.

This is part of the reason that, among the current tsunami of detective novels, "The Return," by the Swedish writer Håkan Nesser, is such a bust. It's set in an unnamed country in Northern Europe. Not Stockholm, like Sjöwall and Wahlöö's Martin Beck series; not picturesque old Ystad, like Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander series. It's just set in a place that looks vaguely like Sweden, somewhere out in the countryside, where Inspector Van Veeteren is investigating the mystery of the headless corpse wrapped in a carpet and dumped in a ditch. A transcription of Van Veeteren's thought processes is the main narrative technique: "Here I am, he thought." Van Veeteren is profound. "The world, he thought. Life." But so is the author: "What strange worlds there were in existence." Perhaps so, but not in this part of the country. There is scarcely a building of any kind to remember. Some spur road into the woods off the highway is the closest the book gets to having any mean streets. As for a man to go down them, Van Veeteren could borrow a leaf from Van der Valk, the Dutch detective who made a splash thirty years ago because he was co-starring with Amsterdam. Van Veeteren is playing opposite a ditch.

Crime novels set in Italy never seem to have this problem. And an Italian setting brings other advantages, too. A requirement of today's lone detective is that the police force he serves on be riven by faction if not corruption, so that he has adversaries on the inside to contend with. That requirement is easily met in Italy, where what seems like dozens of different police forces jostle to get on the take. Against such a background, the lone detectives are in many cases invented by writers who are not native Italians, but just visiting.

My younger daughter, a crime-fiction maven, was the one who tipped me off that the Italian maverick cop who really counted was Commissario Brunetti, created by Donna Leon. Inspector Brunetti operates in Venice. Donna Leon, however, is not Venetian, or even Italian. She may have lived in Venice for twenty-five years, but she benefits mightily from the outsider's traditional love of the Serenissima. Donna Leon is an American, and although the Brunetti novels are bestsellers in many languages, she has so far not allowed their translation into Italian. Thus her fans are either non-Italians (she's especially big in Germany) or Italians who read foreign languages. It seems a fair guess that the factor uniting them all is a sad involvement with Venice. In every fan's first-pick Brunetti novel, "Acqua Alta," Leon gives intimate details of the decaying city while never delaying the action.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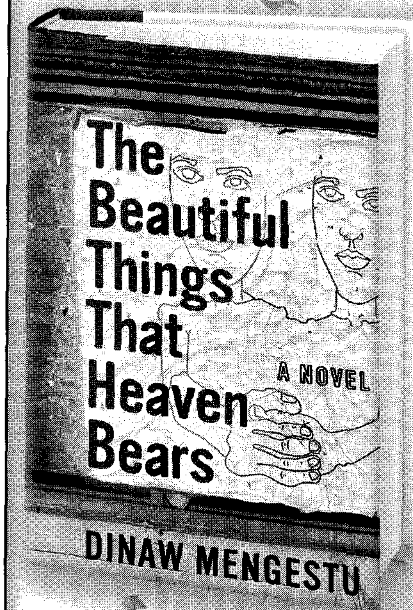

"Dinaw Mengestu has told a rich and lyrical story of displacement and loneliness. **I was profoundly moved by this tale of an Ethiopian immigrant's search for acceptance, peace, and identity."**
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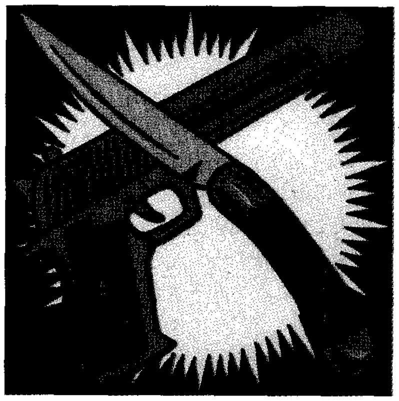
Hers is an unusually potent cocktail of atmosphere and event.

Always vowing to give up soon, I have read about ten Brunetti novels and have got well past the stage of remembering what happens in which book, even though the author is pretty good at not letting background detail overwhelm foreground action. You always know which canal the body is in, but the inspector never takes his eye off the way it has been lashed to the piling. ("Although the fish and crabs had been at her during the high water of September, he knew it must be the Englishwoman, Kate Croy.") Usually, in this sort of book, the sleuth is divorced, eating a snatched sandwich and drinking hard, especially if he is Irish. But Inspector Brunetti can't wait to get home to his hot wife and her subtle tricks with the calamari. He is kept on the case, however, by crimes of rare intricacy that would take time to solve even if he were not frustrated all the way by an incompetent senior officer. Meanwhile, the beautiful city sinks slowly but irretrievably into a sea of corruption. Down these mean streets a man must row who is not himself mean.



Another of the vast crowd of Italian lone detectives, Inspector Zen, is also the creation of a non-Italian, Michael Dibdin: based in Seattle, background in England and Northern Ireland. Typical among Dibdin's several Zen novels, "Vendetta" reveals that Dibdin commands a precisely literate prose. He knows what it means to "eke out," for example. But he doesn't know that the action would move faster if Inspector Zen—a member of the Criminalpol section of the Ministry of the Interior, where he's unpopular with his superiors for being too honest—didn't take what feels like a hundred pages to get across Rome, mentally noting every detail, as if he were a writer. The disadvantage of an author's being a *straniero* is thereby starkly revealed. Non-Italians are prone to find Italy too fascinating (a temptation that Donna Leon only *just* avoids), and the homegrown writer often scores on the level of economical evocation.

Featuring prominently in this department is Andrea Camilleri, the inventor of the Inspector Montalbano mysteries. Montalbano's bailiwick is Sicily. If mainland Italy is corrupt, Sicily is corrupter, and Montalbano has some plenty-mean streets to walk down. He does so at a brisk pace, and it is because Camilleri knows his background too well to be impressed. He speaks the language.

A typical Montalbano novel, and one that I recommend heartily for when you can spare a couple of sunlit afternoons from "The Wings of the Dove," is the impeccably grimy "The Shape of Water." Hookers, junkies, scary crime, inspired sleuthing, great sexual tension between Montalbano and the vampy young female cop Corporal Anna Ferrara. Camilleri can do a character's whole backstory in half a paragraph, and only rarely do you get that giveaway trade trick by which one character tells another what he already knows, so that you can find out. "You know what he's like," says A to B about C, and then proceeds to tell B what C is like, as if B didn't already know. Nor does Camilleri resort to the trick of planting his protagonist in front of a mirror and giving him Rembrandt's ability to depict himself.

That last habit is one of the sure signs of the beginner in genre writing. Italy's most recent crime-fiction wonder boy, Massimo Carlotto, hasn't got even that far yet. But, unlike most crime writers, Carlotto has spent time in prison, which gives him a flying start in street cred. In the days of the Red Brigades, he was accused of murder and did time on the run and in jail before being pardoned and sprung into a life of writing. If only he wrote better.

Carlotto's recent "The Master of Knots" is a story of torture, snuff movies, and arbitrary death that once again features his freelance fighter for justice, nicknamed Alligator. Alligator drinks Calvados the way the Scots and Irish boys drink whiskey, but, unlike them, and like most of the other Italian sleuths, he lines his stomach with decent food, evoked in some detail. His friend Max is a cook: "Max had prepared linguine with a cream sauce containing prawns and aubergine." Philip Marlowe never ate anything like that. On the other hand, Philip Marlowe never had to listen to anything like this: "'We've absolutely got to find a way of stopping the Master of Knots and his gang,' Max said angrily." Those are the moments that make real writers wonder if they shouldn't get into the crime-fiction business and run up a score.

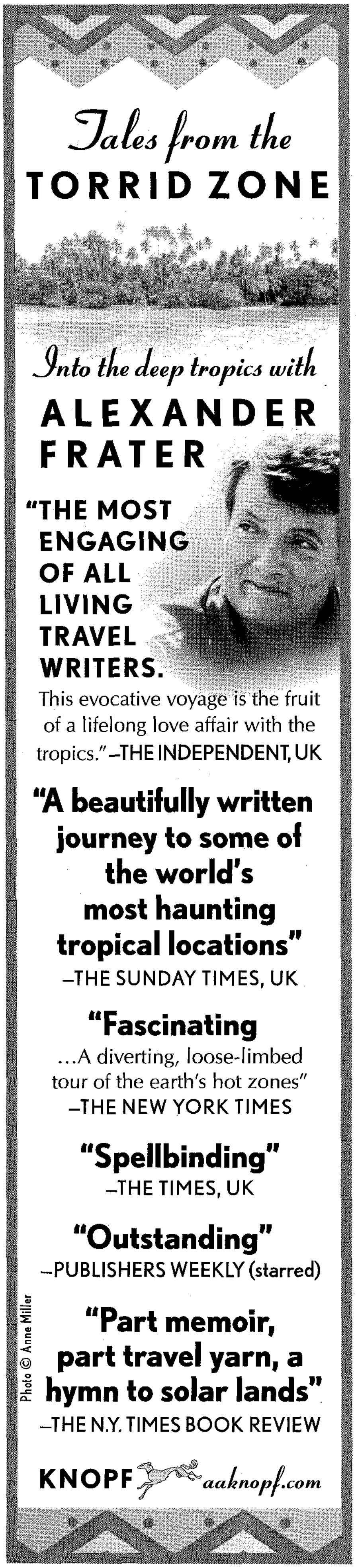
The temptation isn't new. The British poet C. Day Lewis was once the crime novelist Nicholas Blake, and for a while Julian Barnes was Dan Kavanagh, whose bisexual private eye Duffy patrolled Soho in search of loose change. All over Europe and all through modern history, there have been literary writers sending out a sleuth on the same mission. John Banville is the latest to fall for the lure, adopting the pseudonym Benjamin Black in order to produce a crime novel called "Christine Falls," starring Quirke, a pathologist in a Dublin hospital.

The action is set mainly in Dublin and Boston of fifty years ago, so that Quirke can smoke and drink all he wants, which is a lot. There can also be poverty, secrecy, fear of pregnancy, bungled abortion, and all manner of Catholic scandals of the fine old type. In today's Ireland, as prosperous as Monaco, you practically have to be a Russian au-pair girl to get killed, but in Quirke's days of yore there are bodies everywhere. There are also some fine incidental phrases, and that's the trouble: it

POETRY DÉBUTS

Vellum, *by Matt Donovan (Mariner; $11.95)*. These ambitious poems aim to encompass a mass of intellectual and cultural bric-a-brac: "let's begin with macadam, fruit bowls, a Florentine mosaic,/ *Louie Louie*'s three slurred chords, & perhaps for now end there." For Donovan, human consciousness appears to be an ordered schizophrenia, and history a mysterious compilation of tricks, deceptions, and traps. He keeps his dense poems afloat by investing arcane references with emotion and ambiguity. He imagines a young friend licking an El Greco in an act of "adolescent gall" that also expresses the need "to respond to human touch with touch." (The painting is, he feels, the better for it.) Donovan also shows himself acute and powerful in simple moments shorn of allusion. On the death of a friend, he writes, "you are gone/ from here & missed & the silence now has changed."

Frail-Craft, *by Jessica Fisher (Yale; $16)*. In this intelligent, often playful collection, by the winner of last year's Yale Younger Poets prize, a series of elliptical vignettes hint at larger, incompletely apprehended narratives. Fisher builds her verse around absences—roads not taken, lovers who have disappeared—and indicts language for its inadequate approximations: "Although here and now is the medium you move through, then and then is the time of your verbs, every one of them conjugated, forgetful of the infinite which was their tense when they began and which they yearn for." Throughout, her sense of humor keeps the poems grounded. It's the rare poet who can slip nimbly from Lacanian fable to slang and cheerfully explain away infidelity as a case of mistaken identity: "Neither for revenge / nor for lack of love, but because love deep as this sees the beloved / wherever it looks."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"Spellbinding" –THE TIMES, UK

"Outstanding" –PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred)

"Part memoir, part travel yarn, a hymn to solar lands" –THE N.Y. TIMES BOOK REVIEW

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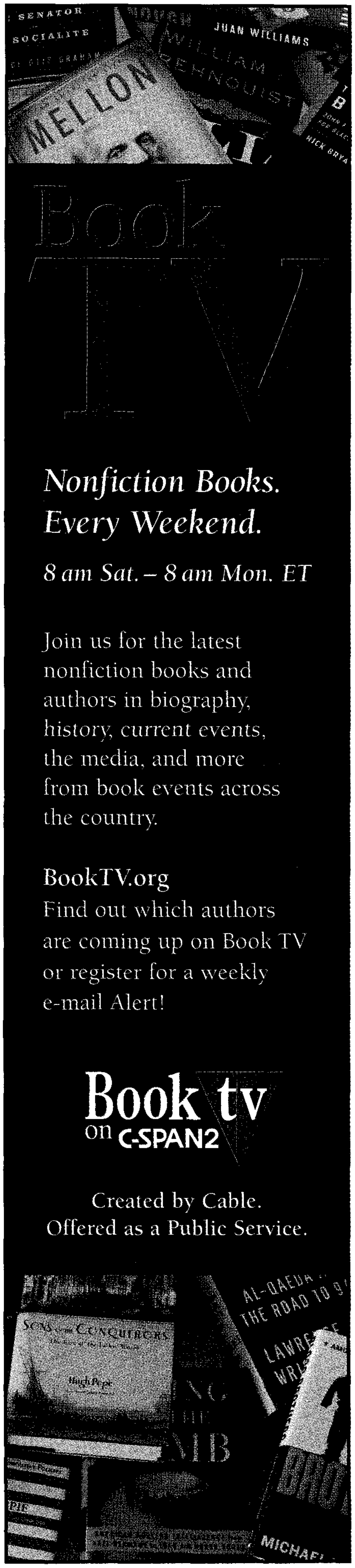
makes you wonder if his heart is in the main action. Raymond Chandler proved that a gifted writer could occupy himself with genre fiction, but Chandler didn't have all that much gift left over—a serious theme would have left him short of analytical tools. "Christine Falls" confronts you with the question of whether you want your crime writer to have that much literary talent.

With respect to crime books that show a genuine literary gift, my pick of the current batch would have to be Gene Kerrigan's "The Midnight Choir," starring Inspector Synnott. The book is set in today's Dublin, but Synnott manages to find a few mysterious bodies among the parked BMWs. Synnott is divorced, drinks whiskey, and eats particularly badly: three scrambled eggs and a couple of slightly off tomatoes when cooking for himself, a cardboard box of kung-pao-beef takeout when he's in a hurry. But Kerrigan's prose (presuming that there really is a Kerrigan, and that this isn't Seamus Heaney hustling for a buck) is luxury stuff: brief, funny descriptions, phrases that give you the speaker's age ("*Every move totally ace*"), and a complete financial analysis of a city whose property prices are going up like a flock of flamingos off a lake of money.

I would gladly believe it all, except that Kerrigan doesn't. Synnott, his man of integrity, spends the first half of the book being incorruptible, and the second half trying to frame the perps. Serpico turns into the Prince of the City, and finally we have no hero. Down these mean streets a man must go who is as mean as the streets are? Genre fiction that gets too far into the ambiguous tends to remind us that if we had a hankering for the quasi-meaningless we could have stuck with *le nouveau roman*. It would be nice to think that Kerrigan had got himself lost in a genuine search for complexity, but I fear that he just became impatient with the form.

That's understandable. No matter how carefully depicted, whether by the omniscient author or by themselves looking at length into their shaving mirrors, these maverick detectives are too consistent to be true characters. Given all those other constraints—the finite number of angles at which the hooker's headless corpse can hang from the chandelier—there's a worry that even the travelogue aspect could begin to feel a bit too heavily trodden. In some respects, Henry James had it easier. It may be tempting to muss up Kate Croy's sitting room with a freshly murdered corpse, but that's just an adventure holiday. The real adventure, less gripping but far more memorable, is waiting to begin again on page 14. ♦



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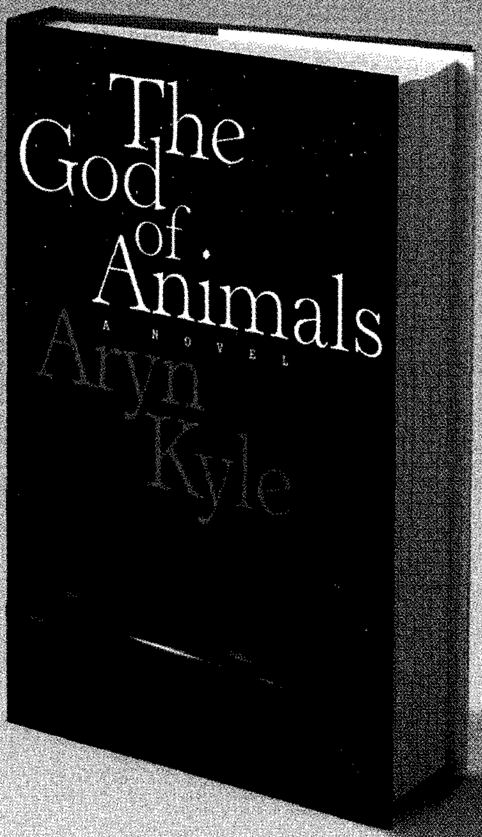

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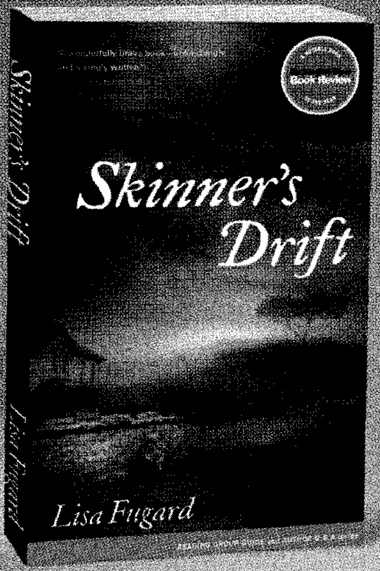

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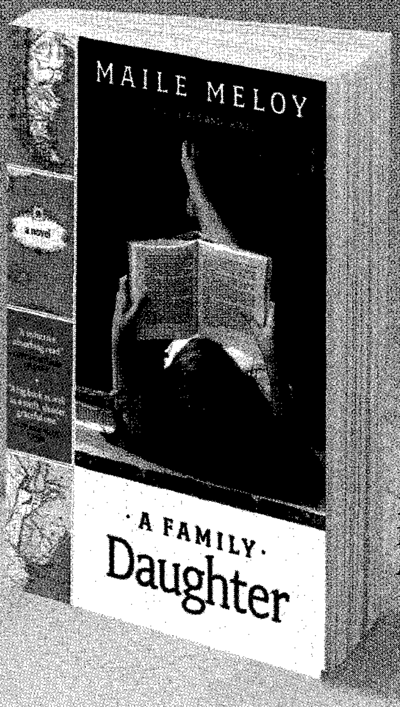

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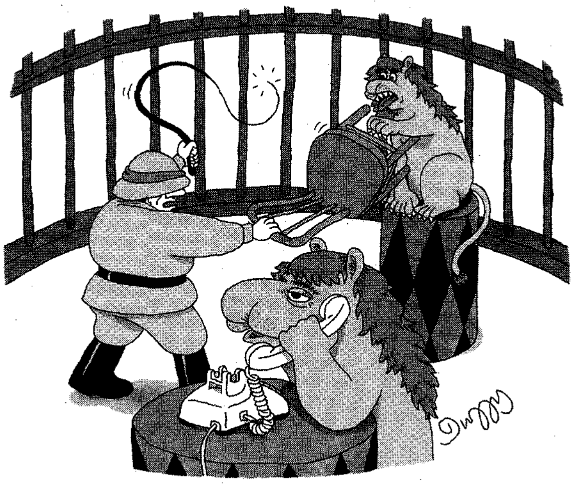
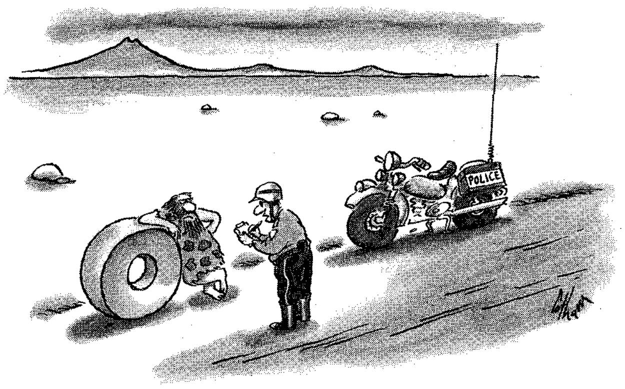


"How many times do I have to tell you, don't call me at work!"
Chris Weaver, Kelsey, Calif.



THE FINALISTS

"Yeah, yeah—and I invented the ticket."
Scott Gerschwer, Redding, Conn.

"I'm going to let you off with a warning, since you have no prior history."
Chris Kikel, Cleveland Heights, Ohio

"Mind if I look in the hole?"
Jennifer McLellan, Kansas City, Mo.

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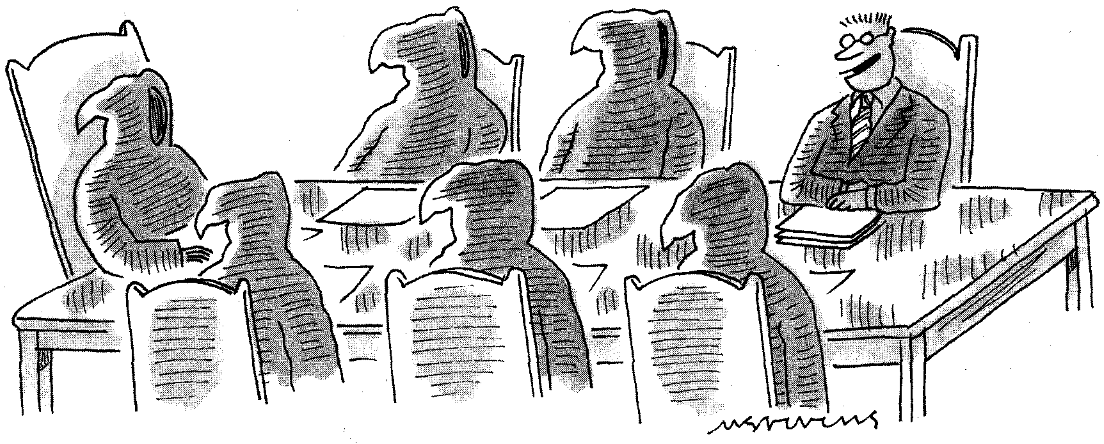

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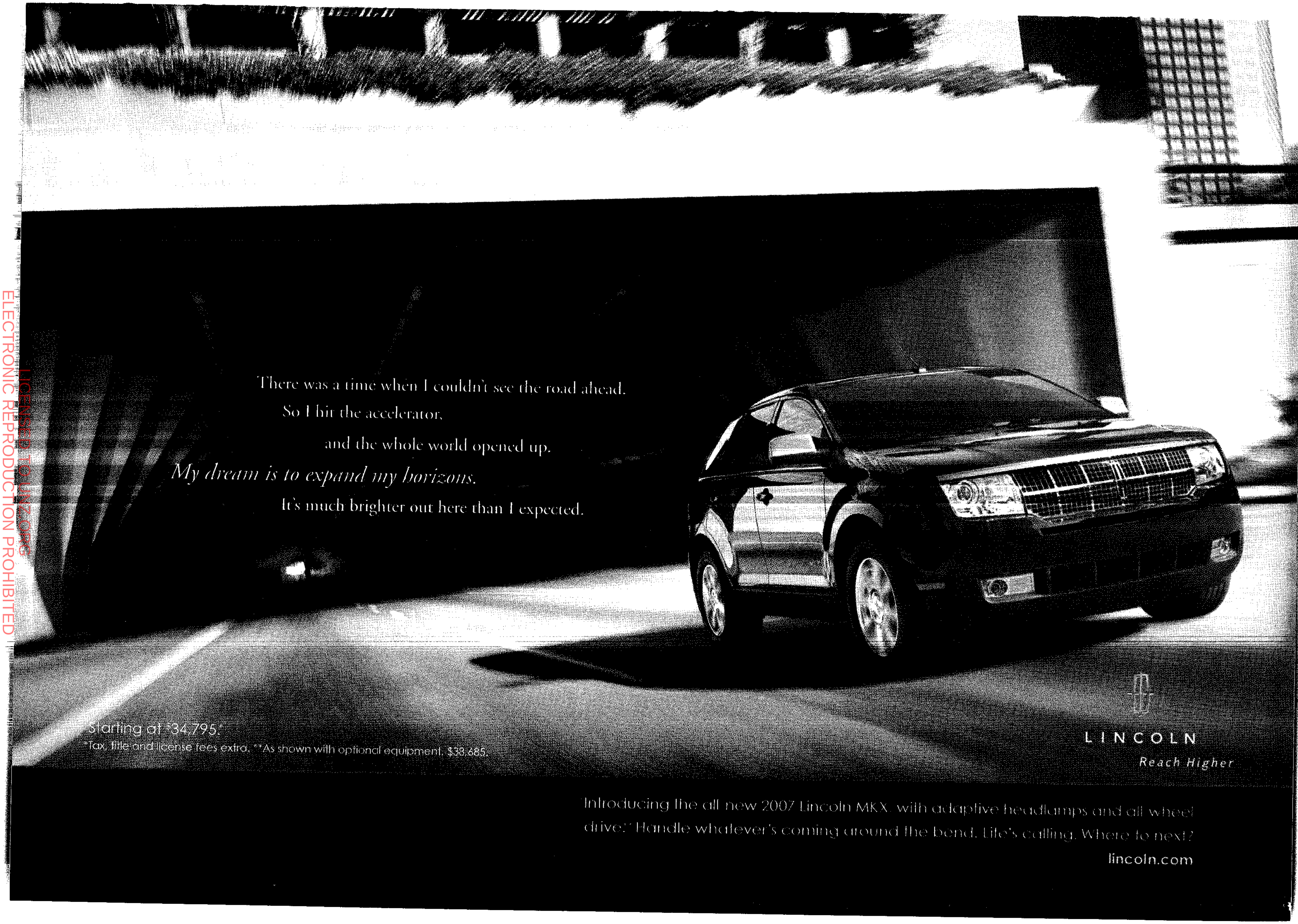

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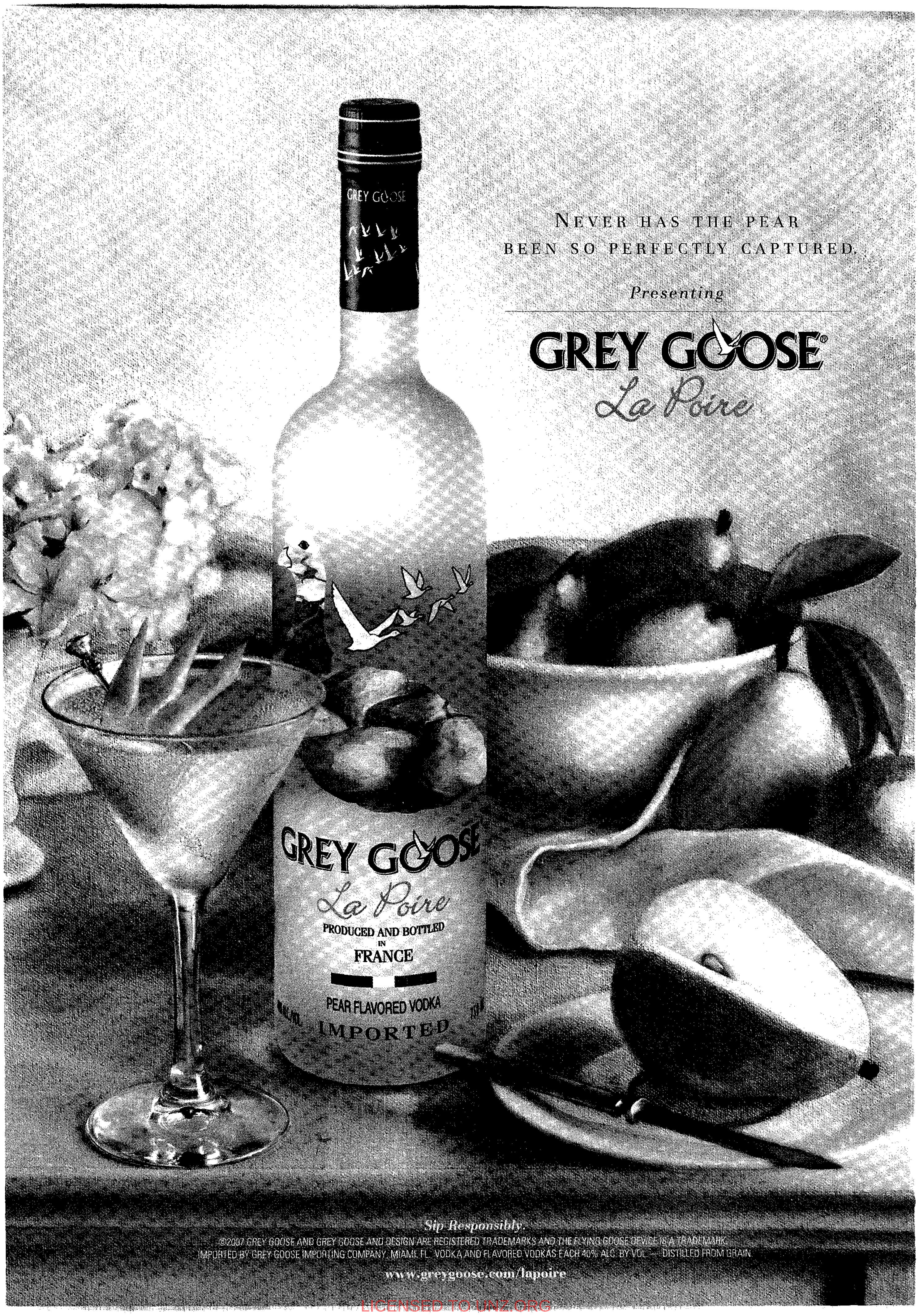
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